

The Benefice of Northallerton and Romanby with Kirby Sigston

**Parish Office
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Tuesday 24th March 2020

The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes

I am writing to everyone connected with our three churches (whose addresses I have) following the Archbishops' recent instructions, first last week to suspend public worship and then last night to close all church buildings in the light of the Coronavirus. This means that our regular services and all activities are on hold, however we have not shut up shop!

Prayer and Worship

Advice is changing quickly but St James, Romanby, St Lawrence, Kirby Sigston and All Saints Church, Northallerton will remain closed for the time being.

At 9.30am and 4.30pm everyday I will be saying Prayers; I invite you to join in using one of the prayer booklets (enclosed). I hope that many of us will be able to pray at those times, wherever we are, knowing that we are all praying together. Of course another time may be more suitable to you, do make that choice. We are looking at possibly streaming a service from the church, but in the meantime, if you are online or social media, do check out the many resources that the Church of England are offering, see below.

The weekly 'pew sheet' will continue to be produced and will be available on our website, and can be emailed or posted out if you let me know. It will have the readings and prayers for each Sunday and will be distributed each week in time for the coming Sunday.

Prayer requests can be left in All Saints or by phone on the office number (01609 773338).

Looking after each other

Please do stay in touch with one another and with your neighbours. If you have given your express permission for your contact details to be generally known you are in the enclosed address book. Do use it to stay in touch with others. Please check your details are correct and let me know any changes (and phone number/email if not listed). If there is no address book

with this letter it means that we don't have your clear permission for your details to be circulated. If you do not mind your details being circulated please let me know, giving me the details at the same time.

As well as staying in touch with one another, a group of us will be making regular phone contact throughout this time. If you would like a phone call please don't wait for a call but ring the office, 01609 773338.

For practical help, there are a number of folk who have volunteered to help with shopping, collecting pensions or prescriptions, etc. Again if you would like help with anything, or know someone who might, ring the office number. I am making sure that all proper safeguarding is being observed as we help in this way.

If you would like to be a volunteer offering either phone or practical support please let me know. Also please do carry on supporting our local foodbank, via their website <https://hambletonfoodshare.org.uk/> or over the phone (07514 244158) and any charities that support the vulnerable, considering if you can give extra help at this time.

And on a Practical Note

In the absence of any services, I am aware that you have no Collection Plate in which to place your weekly offerings/envelopes. Our parish expenses continue and we need to maintain a continuing flow of income. When you are out on your daily exercise, donations can be dropped into the letterbox at All saints church (in the back door that leads to the office). Offerings for Kirby Sigston can be left here too and we'll make sure they get to St Lawrence.

Alternatively you could set up a standing order – get in touch with me on how to do that. You can get in touch either on the office number or my email at the top of this letter.

We will also keep a record of the amounts taken over this period and bless them once the church re-opens for worship.

The Archbishops' said this in their letter on Tuesday this week:

Being a part of the Church of England is going to look very different in the days ahead. Our life is going to be less characterised by attendance at church on Sunday, and more characterised by the prayer and service we offer each day. We may not be able to pray with people in the ways that we are used to, but we can certainly pray for people. And we can certainly offer practical care and support. Then by our service, and by our love, Jesus Christ will be made known, and the hope of the gospel – a hope that will counter fear and isolation - will spread across our land.

This is a defining moment for the Church of England. Are we truly a church for all, or just the church for ourselves? We urge you sisters and brothers to become a different sort of church in these coming months: hopeful and rooted in the offering of prayer and praise and overflowing in service to the world. Please, therefore, join us in this great challenge; and pray for our Government and nation, for each other, and especially for those who work in our health and emergency services.

Further advice is coming to me quite quickly and I shall do my best to keep you posted as things change and progress. Please be assured of my prayers at this time. Not for nothing is the most frequent command in the bible “Be not afraid!” I echo the Archbishops’ comment that hope may counter fear and isolation, and that we will be known by how we love God, our neighbour and one another.

With all prayers and blessing

Revd Fiona Mayer-Jones
(Vicar)

If you are the online sort do check out:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-liturgy-and-prayer-resources>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

where you’ll find:

- **#LiveLent: Care for God's Creation** - the Church of England's Lent campaign for 2020.
- **The BBC's Daily Service and Sunday Worship**
- **Prayer for the day**
- **and more ...**

Alongside the use of audio, app, smart speakers and social media, one of the main principles they are working to is to make as much as possible available in simple downloadable and printable formats for those who can't easily access the technology. We will aim to provide these in coming days; if you know anyone who might benefit from these resources but without the tech, why not print off for them and send it, or let me know and we'll do it from the office.