

STOMP BULLETIN EXTRA - 3

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Bulletin Extra 3! I'm hoping that we won't need to keep sending out these Bulletins but the light at the end of the tunnel still seems distant and faint! I am so grateful to Jeff Wallis for keeping us all in touch, and for those on WhatsApp Brian Doran has set up a great support group which keeps growing and is going from strength-to-strength, see Revd Caroline's report which follows if you would like to join.

In case the GDPR police are reading this don't forget you can opt out of these communications if you want, just let Jeff know.

Saturday Opening update

Sadly, following the advice of government and the statement of the Bishops we have had to close both churches for all activities and this includes being open on Saturday. I know that so many people who visit St Paul's and St Mary's on a Saturday value this greatly but what we are doing is for the common good supporting government advice and backing our wonderful NHS workers.

Bishop Michael of Hertford called both me and Caroline this week as part of his pastoral care for the clergy and he felt that total church closure would not last long, I hope he is right. We will open when we can so watch this space.

Passion and Palm Sunday

Isn't it amazing that we are only just over two weeks away from Easter. What a strange time it will be for Christians this year. Of course as things stand we will not be able to open our church buildings for this coming Passion Sunday or for Palm Sunday. The traditional Palm Sunday procession will also not take place. Nevertheless, we will bless palms for future distribution.

This coming Sunday, often called Passion Sunday as it sees the start of Passiontide, Revd Caroline will be writing a short thought that will go out with the Bulletin and be sent to you by email. We will send you the readings as well so that you can think through the liturgy and make your own devotions online. I will worship in St Mary's and send you some film of this later on Sunday and throughout next week. By a fortunate few legal anomalies (like living next to St Mary's and not having to go on any public road or lane to access it as well as other things) I am able to use St Mary's this Sunday. Sadly, I can't welcome you there but do be assured that each one of you will be remembered at the altar.

Once again some wonderful live worship will be available on the radio and television so do keep involved and let us know how you get on.

Easter

I'm reminding everyone I talk to that Easter will still happen but sadly not in the ways we know and love. The closure of our churches is sad for all of us but I hope you will be strengthened by the knowledge that the Paschal light will be lit afresh in both churches at Easter. Sadly, as things stand that will be done by me alone.

Our Holy Week and Easter plans remain subject to review and revision, please watch this space.

Weddings

We have now talked to couples and postponed weddings up until July. We will continue to work with couples to let them have their special celebration with us when the situation allows.

Funerals

The latest advice regarding funerals means that we must take them at cemeteries and crematoria and not in churches. Mourners are limited to parents, children and grandchildren and social distancing rules are being enforced. I am interring ashes on Saturday for a sick clergy colleague (don't panic Norman, not at St Mary's!) and have several funerals over the next few weeks.

What the clergy are doing

Apart from prayer and the support of people that Revd Caroline talks about later on one might wonder what the clergy are now doing? Of course many colleagues are sick or self-isolating and I know of one fellow Police Chaplain who has coronavirus but for the rest of us funeral ministry continues apace although it is much changed with talking to close family over the phone and having simplified services.

The Diocese of St Albans is working with NHS Hertfordshire to deal with support for bereaved relatives who may not have been able to visit their family member before they have died. We are also working with Hertfordshire County Council to look at what to do if we are overwhelmed with people who have died and need to look at alternative body storage and funeral methods. So on Thursday I was on a conference call with Bishop's Alan and Michael to consider how we respond to these needs. Most of my day is now unfortunately spent on extra-parochial work like this rather than the usual mix.

Please let us know of your needs or the needs of your neighbours and offers of help!

Please keep in touch with each other at this difficult time, through regular phone calls and emails as well as the WhatsApp Group. If you become aware of someone who could do with some help, or if you need some help yourself with groceries or require a regular chat, please do not hesitate to let us know. If you are able to offer to be a buddy to someone who is currently isolated, also please let us know. We are all in this together, and no-one must struggle alone.

Trips to the Supermarket

If you would like a lift and help with your shopping at these times, then please let us know.

Revd Caroline writes

Staying at home with children

There have been some fantastic resources devised by the diocesan children's mission enabler which is full of great ideas of things to do with the children whilst at home. Please find the sheet attached below. This includes a link to a film clip of the re-telling of this weekend's Gospel reading The Raising of Lazarus.

https://mcusercontent.com/c3d56e531a20b37f8e8d6145a/files/bcad376a-5759-44b8-8529-dd977d39b47f/3_CMNweekly_25Mar2020.pdf

Further to our call for the children (and adults) to make cards, draw pictures, write poems etc to be distributed to those who are self-isolating, we are obviously no longer able to collect these in church so please leave anything either at the Rectory or at 7 Mountfield Road HP2 5DR and we will distribute them (once having been through suitable quarantine of course!)

Keeping in touch

I have been keeping regular phone and email contact with many parishioners this week and am really happy to report that most are doing well and are well-supported. One or two may need some help as time goes on, plus there may be others amongst you or others you know who could do with some practical, emotional or spiritual advice or support. Please do not hesitate to contact either me or Canon John (our contact details are below) and we will do all we can to help. We have had already some offers of help, and likewise if you are able to offer any form of support to others, please do let us know.

If you are someone who uses **WhatsApp** to keep in contact with family and friends, a special St. Mary and St. Paul's group has been set up which has become a wonderful way to support each other, offer prayers and encouragement. If you would like to join the group, just contact one of the administrators either Brian Doran (brian.doran10@googlemail.com), me or Canon John and we will add you.

Caroline

Conclusion

Everything is changing so fast with each new day bringing a new unexpected challenge so do keep in touch with church and parish things and if you have any questions or points of interest be sure to let us know. Bulletin Extra 4 will follow when there is more to share.

With every prayer and blessing,

John (and Caroline!)

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