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Thursday 26th March 2020

## An open letter to our parishioners

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Dear Friends,

### **Church Closures**

Yesterday we began to feel the pinch as a worshipping community. The realisation that our much loved churches, such symbols of hope for our wider communities as much as those who regularly attend worship must remain closed until the end of this current crisis is painful, and also seems counter-intuitive. Surely at this time we need the churches open more than ever, people need the space to come close to God so much more than before? The message from the Archbishops, however, is clear:

**Last updated Tuesday 24 March 2020 at 17:55**

“Following the [Prime Minister’s announcement](#) of 23rd March, the [Archbishops have written to clergy in support of the measures](#), requiring that churches must now close both for private worship and public services.

Our church buildings are therefore now closed for public worship, private prayer and all other meetings and activities except for vital community services until further notice.”

This is not just well meaning advice, it is now the law, and to break it risks facing limitless fines. What’s more, for us to risk breaking the law and opening the churches in order to provide comfort could also prove fatal. Anyone entering the building could unwittingly contaminate the door handles, the pew edges, the pew bibles..... and pass that on to the next person entering.

This is not fear-mongering, but taking wise precautions to protect each other. This is an active way in which we can love our neighbours.

It feels as if so much has been stripped away from us, but there is still so much we *can* do. We can still go for a daily walk. We can still see the church steeples and towers from a distance and be reminded of God’s love. We can place rainbows in our windows as a reminder of God’s promise

made to Noah. We can pray from home, we can stop by the churchyard on our daily walk and pray in the shadow of the church.

God's presence has never been restricted to the stone walls of the church: God is with us wherever we are.

When this is all over and the churches are open again, we will fill them with music and flowers, the bells will ring, and we will be able to meet face to face once more. Until then, stay safe, stay home.

### **Round of Applause for our Key Workers**

We have been encouraged to do something positive at 8pm today. As frustrating as it is to be in 'lock down' mode, just imagine what it must be like to be a key worker? Teachers going in to school to look after other key workers' children, even though it means distancing themselves from their own families; shop workers being spat on at the checkout; medics coming face to face daily with exposure to the virus; funeral directors explaining to the bereaved that they cannot have the funeral they had planned; carers still tending to the vulnerable; administrators and decision makers at Public Health England..... the list goes on.

Tonight at 8pm the nation will be opening their doors and windows to give a huge round of applause of appreciation for what our key workers are giving of themselves at this time. If you are a key worker, this is for you: THANK YOU.

*Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided –  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

Thomas O Chisholm

With love and blessings

Vanessa