

Parish of Saint Thomas, Apostle and Martyr

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The Rev'd Jutta Brueck, Priest in Charge

To: Everyone who attends St Thomas Church

Dear brother or sister,

As you may have seen or heard in the news this week, all public worship has been suspended and all group meetings discontinued. This, of course, applies to St Thomas Church, but it doesn't mean that we are 'shutting up shop'! While we are not able to meet for worship, mutual support, socializing or study, we are keen to continue to stay in touch with each other, especially those who are vulnerable and housebound and to spend time with God, saying our prayers and paying attention to God's presence with us at this challenging time.

I found this quote by *Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk and well known spiritual teacher* this week: 'You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope.'

So what are we doing at St Thomas to continue to be the church:

1. The Church remains open and we continue to say the daily office and celebrate the Eucharist.

On Mondays to Thursdays & Sundays, the church building will be open in the mornings from 9.30 until 11.30, for personal prayer, pastoral support and as a drop-off point for FIND. Members of the ministry team will continue to say morning prayer at 9.30 on Mondays, Tuesday and Thursdays, and the Eucharist will be celebrated on Wednesdays at 10 and Sundays at 10, on behalf of the parish.

2. We will provide a weekly sheet with readings, reflections and prayer intentions on the St Thomas church website (www.stthomasipswich.org.uk)

and will post it to church members who don't use the internet.

We would like to encourage everyone to spend time on a Sunday with church, either by listening to a church service on the radio or television, or using the readings/ resources we have made available.

3. We would like to set up phone networks

The pastoral care team will make sure that everyone who is housebound, living on their own, will get regular phone calls, but we are thinking it would be great to stay in touch with everyone. For example, we could set up a system where everyone in church phones one other member of the congregation on a Sunday or day you arrange, perhaps, a person who sits near you at church. We will seek permission before we give out any phone number. Let Rev Cat or myself know what you think about this.

4. **Praying for everyone who comes to church**

On the weekly sheet, in addition to those who are sick, we would like to include the names of everyone who comes to church – perhaps 10 names each week (this will include the names of children) – that way we continue to think of each other. I saw a facebook post from a Roman Catholic priest who has asked the members of his congregation to send in a photo, which he is going to put around church so he can think of them when he celebrates the mass. Feel free to send in a photo!

Please, let me know if you DO NOT want your name (First name & surname) or those of your children (First name) included.

5. **Diocesan and National church initiatives**

- a) The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby is to lead a national broadcast this Sunday. **The service will be broadcast on all BBC local radio stations in England at 8am and will premier online at 9am on Sunday** – see the attached sheet for more information
- b) The Bishops and their staff are live streaming morning prayer at 8.30am every morning (Monday to Saturday) live from the Bishop's chapel on their facebook page: (facebook/bishop martin and bishop mike cofe Suffolk). You can say the daily office with them, or listen in and pray with them – a great way to start the day. The video stays there to watch/ listen to at any time.

I hope that you manage to stay well and hopeful in the weeks to come. Reverend Cat and I will stay in touch with you. Please, **do phone us**, if you would value a chat, finding you are getting anxious and distressed or want us to pray with you. If you are concerned about the cost incurred by phoning our mobile numbers, please tell us and we are happy to ring you back.

Also, let me know if you would like to borrow a bible or a book for daily prayer – I am happy to drop one off at your house.

We don't know how all of this is going to pan out; **if any of you need help with shopping or anything else, please, do not hesitate to let Revd Cat or myself know-** several people have offered help, where needed. And, please, send in prayer requests for anyone who is on your mind.

God is with us in crisis. Many of the psalms in the bible tell us that 'God is our rock and our stronghold' (Ps. 46), and this is a time when we need to lean on God and allow God to be at work among us.

You are in our thoughts and prayers, and we look forward to the day when we can meet and worship together again.

With love in Christ,

Jutta
Rev Jutta Brueck
(Priest in charge)

Cat
Rev Cat Connolly
(Assistant Curate)