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 THE CHURCH  
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Diocese of Leeds

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Thursday 19th March 2020

Dear Friends,

We are living in unprecedented times and we are being asked as a Church to do things differently and so upon receipt of advice from Bishop Nick, the Bishop of Leeds, the Church of England, the Government and the NHS regarding Coronavirus these are the measures that St Mary's will put into place.

Christians are called not to live their lives in fear and therefore we must not hide away so whilst our Church will be closed for public worship, it will be open for private prayer daily between 10.00am and 11.00am and 6.00pm to 7.00pm commencing on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 until further notice. The advice for those wanting to come into church for Private Prayer is as follows:

Wash your hands before you sit down in church.

Sit the recommended distance apart (2m/6ft) to reduce the risk of infection. Self-isolate if you have a continuous cough or a high temperature and follow the advice given by the NHS.

Also commencing from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 10.00am on Wednesdays and 10.30am on Sundays I will say the Eucharist privately at the altar as per the Archbishops' instructions. This cannot be a public act of worship therefore only the Priest will take Holy Communion – if you happen to be in church at that time for private prayer then of course it will be an Act of Spiritual Communion where we can individually ask Jesus to be spiritually present with us in that moment.

If you are at home or in self-isolation and you usually worship with us at that time (or if you don't) and you want to join in with us by praying at home in those times then the more the merrier as we pray for God's world and its needs.

We will endeavour to call those who are vulnerable weekly to ensure their well-being and if you have a relative or know of someone who is isolated and would appreciate a call each week then please let us know and we will make contact with them. My email is [vicar@stmarywoodkirk.org](mailto:vicar@stmarywoodkirk.org) or the Vicarage telephone number is 01924 472375.

All events in the Parish Hall have been cancelled until further notice – if you did attend a group in the Parish Hall why not make an effort to call each other at the times you would meet. We are not alone during this time God is with us and we all can reach out to another person.

I will send out a Pew Sheet each week via email and/or place it on the facebook page with bible readings for each day and any other updates or information that you need to know. Please continue to read your scripture during this time.

If you would like a visit during this time I am happy to visit providing all parties are not in self-isolation due to being in contact with another person who shows symptoms and of course if you are in hospital and gravely ill then please contact as normal.

One of the most difficult things at the moment is Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.

The latest advice is as follows:

All Baptisms will be postponed until further notice and my Baptism Co-Ordinator, Barbara Tate will be contacting each family at the beginning of next week.

All Weddings can go ahead but only with the following present Priest, Bride, Groom and two witnesses. I have contacted half my weddings for this year and will contact the remainder in the next few days. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me as above.

Funerals can go ahead but in a limited fashion. Only very close and immediate family should be present. Please remember the advice given by the Government for those vulnerable groups of people. If it is appropriate at a later date I am happy to hold a memorial service for your loved one.

Obviously as things change I will keep you updated.

We are being asked to be church in a different way, to go back to a simpler form of prayer for the whole world. Our need for God and the Eucharist is

great and so we at St Mary's (I am using the Royal we here as I really mean ME) are playing catch up with technology. I have placed Morning Prayer on our Facebook page this morning <https://www.facebook.com/stmarywoodkirk> and I will do the same with the Eucharist on Sunday. In time we may be able to live stream these events.

Sunday, of course, is Mothering Sunday and so we will celebrate it the best way we can giving thanks for those who care for us but being sensitive to those who have lost their Mums or for those who want children but sadly are not able to have them.

The Archbishops' have also called for a National Day of Prayer this coming Sunday. This brings us together for a single purpose and they are asking for every household to light a candle and place it your window at 7.00pm as a sign of solidarity and hope, a reminder that the light of Christ can never be extinguished.

Finally, many people will be worried about family, jobs and finances. Where we can, can we please support local businesses, repress the urge to bulk buy and also remember the Foodbanks who in this area only have five weeks of food left. There are many worse off than ourselves and we are called to share what we have.

If anyone wishes to donate to the Foodbank then those donations can be left in the church entrance when it is open for private prayer as above.

I will be praying for you all and I ask that you also keep me in your prayers.

Best wishes

Sharon Vicar