

Nork with Burgh Heath Parish News and Updates - Tuesday 31st March 2020

Dear Church Family Members & Parish Friends,

Hoping very much that this finds you well and that you are managing in these strange times.

I am loving keeping in touch with many of you through your messages, calls and emails - thank you! I am also pleased to say that I have knowledge of all of you through the work of our 'Coronavirus Crisis Pastoral Phone Call and Shopping Teams', who are keeping me updated regularly after calling the rest of you (in small lists) to see how you are on behalf of the parish. It is a delight to hear news of each one of you - and if you haven't yet spoken to me directly, I am certainly praying and am probably more up to date on your news than you may think! My love to every one of you, as always.

This email is to continue to keep you all updated with some of the things which are happening in our parish at the current time - and of some things which are coming up which may be of interest to you.

The items covered will be as follows:

- 1) Updates on how we are doing as church family and as a parish
- 2) Useful resources to follow on from my sermon on Sunday on 'The Art of Neighbouring'
- 3) Our plans for Holy Week - starting with this Sunday, which is Palm Sunday
- 4) News from various church family members, which they would like to share

Updates on how we are doing as Church Family and as a parish

As church family, I am blown away by the wonderful way we are all caring for each other - within and across both of our churches. Such a joy it is, to see everyone reaching out to others - and to receive messages from people who are saying that, out of this crisis, new relationships are being formed and older ones grown. Praise God for this wonderful and beautiful development!

The challenges which face us at the moment as a whole family are as follows:

- 1) A number of families or individuals have now had the virus or very similar symptoms (sometimes not confirmed officially). Most, at this stage, have been ill but recovered well. However, we do have a family member (from St. Mary's) still in hospital, who is very unwell. It is not confirmed yet whether she actually has coronavirus, but she is struggling with breathing and is on oxygen and a drip. Please do keep praying for her and her family.
- 2) We have a large list (on its way to you all for prayer) - of key workers, in our church families or related to members of our church families, who are still working at this time. They are all doing wonderful jobs - in the NHS, the emergency services, teaching, working for the government, working in the local care homes, sorting our waste disposal and

security, working for the church (yes clergy are classified as key workers too!) - and so much more. Please do join me in praying for our key workers.

3) A number of us, from both church families, are now struggling with various mental health needs at this time. This is completely expected, normal, and not something to be ashamed or embarrassed about... but I am concerned about the rise in symptoms of depression, anxiety and other forms of mental illness for members of us at this time. All of us have had an enormous shock - and all of us will experience this in different ways and feel high, low, or simply strange and out of sorts at different times. Many of us are very isolated - and all of us restricted in terms of usual life as we know it. Please let's be looking out for each other and praying - and if you talk to someone and are concerned about them, please do get in contact with me in confidence (I always hold your confidences - and the information I know about each of you very, very carefully), as it is very important that help & support can be accessed if anyone needs this.

Useful Resources to Follow on from my sermon on 'The Art of Neighbouring':

Thank you so much for the many encouragements about my attempt at video-sermoning on Sunday! It was greatly appreciated as IT is not my greatest strength - and accessing help from others is only possible by phone or video calls at the moment!! Thank you also, for the encouragement that it had been thought-provoking and helpful at this time. I am so glad and grateful for this too.

The sermon was based on a book called 'The Art of Neighbouring' by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon (which can be obtained from Amazon for £8.99) and for those who would be interested to follow up further, this link: <https://www.artofneighboring.com/about/> provides information to how the materials have been used in the United States to share the love of God. On the website, there are free materials for individual or group study (which could be carried out by skype or Zoom, or other means of video calling) - which are well worth a look. Small group leaders could even consider doing something enterprising with them with your groups, if wished!

Plans for Holy Week:

This Sunday is Palm Sunday, and the following week is Holy Week, leading up to Easter Sunday. I am so grateful to the wonderful team of people have been working on materials to contribute to that week of worship.

Worship for the week will be provided electronically, as is our current temporary 'normal' - and we will be providing an act of worship for every day of the week (except Saturday) as a way of helping us all to draw close to God at this time. These will be sent out by me each evening for the next morning (or failing that early in the morning depending on what emergencies may arise). Having them available means that if you wish to you can use them as devotional time with God each day - or you can select which days you may participate in.

On Easter Saturday, there will be no worship materials sent out - in recognition that on Good Friday, Jesus died for 3 days before rising again and so we have a day of anticipation before celebrating wildly ☺ with Easter Day on the Sunday.

Worship activities specifically for children and families will be provided on Palm Sunday, the Wednesday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday in addition to the above.

News from various family members:

Florence Drewitt and Robert Steenberg - two of our church family children - so enjoyed participating in the Good Samaritan craft activity provided by George and Sophie last week that they have sent their 'hearts to think of others' to show everyone. The photographs are attached! Thank you Robert and Florence. *If any other children would like to send pictures of their activities (without pictures of the actual children) to share, then please do send them over after any Sunday for our weekly news. It has been lovely to receive messages from other families too about what you have been up to at this time.*

Lesley Rice, from St. Mary's, who has recently moved away and had hoped to come back to visit by now sends this message to everyone:

I am praying for you all at this very challenging time, and I wonder if Matthew 11, 28-30, which starts 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.....' would be comforting. This passage meant so much to me when Stephen died. In the paraphrase version 'The Message' it speaks of an invitation to 'Learn the unforced rhythms of Grace'. A lot of us will have a lot of time on our hands in the coming weeks and the idea of resting in Christ's grace is very comforting. Having moved to Dorking, I am enjoying my new house very much, though sad not to be able to share it with friends. I love sitting gazing at Box Hill from my window. I have started to attend St Paul's Church (Dorking), and have begun the process of becoming a Befriender for Christians Against Poverty. I send you my love, Lesley

And, Ron and Judy Goldby, also send the following message (slightly edited by me):

Our youngest son and family have been filming for a TV programme since the middle of last year. They moved from Epsom to Shropshire last August. The programme is called "Country Life for half the price" and will be on Channel 5 on Tuesday April 14th at 9pm. The series, produced by Kate Humble, starts the previous week. The family have had a wonderful time with Kate and have received a lot of help with adjusting to more land and rearing animals and making good use of home grown produce. They have home educated their 9 children since the oldest was 6 and are Biblical in their approach. They are now hoping that this may be additionally useful to other families now that the schools are closed. They are delighted with the preview and their Christian focus has been allowed to shine through. There will also be an article in the Sunday Times (I think next week) to promote the series.

Do stay in touch - and do keep sending items which you would like shared in the 'church family news' section of this weekly news update. It has been lovely to have several items to share this week.

Love and prayers to you all,
Alex

Rev Alex Williams
Vicar
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