



The Greater Corsham and Lacock Team

The Church of England in
Corsham | Gastard | Neston
& Lacock with Bowden Hill
corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk

TEAM NEWS - 25 March 2020

Whilst the Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions are in place this newsletter replaces all our current weekly and monthly newsletters

The Rector writes:

It is difficult to know where to begin with this Wednesday's 'thought for the day' as so much has happened since I wrote one last week, not least the almost total lockdown of normal life announced by the Prime Minister on Monday 23 March. This includes the closure of our church buildings, the suspension of any baptisms or weddings, and funerals being limited to taking place at a graveside or crematoria.

As clergy Adam and I are in the very odd position of being 'religious staff' classed as key workers while almost all the usual contact we have with people through services and other pastoral situations is removed from us. For many of us at the moment there is a sense of bereavement as the opportunity to gather together to worship and support each other is removed. Yes, we can communicate by telephone, email and (where technological skills permit) by Skype or other video communications, but it is not the same as face to face contact.

It is interesting to compare our sense of bereavement with those who have been deprived of watching or attending sporting events. Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp recently described sport as "the most important of the least important things", but another Liverpool football manager Bill Shankly went much further when he said: "Some people believe football is a matter of life and death ... I can assure you it is much, much more important than that." Former Napoli and Argentinian football star Diego Maradona also said this about the people of Naples: "the Neapolitans didn't live for themselves, nor for their children, nor for anything else, all they cared about was how Napoli would play each Sunday."

In many ways our feelings about our faith are similar in that it is something we are deeply passionate about, and many of us care very deeply about being able to join together in worship on Sundays and at other times.

However, in other ways we have something much more tangible and permanent to hold onto during these troubled times. Our God is available to us 24/7 and can be worshipped anywhere and at any time, and when our circumstances are difficult it does not mean that he has abandoned us or loves us any less. As one of my clergy colleagues wrote on Facebook: 'Seeing some Christians share coronavirus related bad theology so let's knock this one on its head: God did not send the Coronavirus to "teach us something."

We live in a complicated broken world and all diseases, including the Coronavirus, are a symptom of that reality.

That doesn't mean that God can't use this situation to teach us something - I hope it will teach us how to care, support and love each other better. It should also humble all of us as we come face to face with our fragility and that in turn could help us all to consider where we put our faith. But that doesn't mean that God has willed this or has planned and executed the spread of the virus.'

And the Bible reading I want to share with you today reflects the reality that God's love remains the same regardless of our circumstances. It is a psalm written to remind the Israelites of God's faithfulness to them during their time in the wilderness, and contains the poignant words 'He provides food for those who fear him'. This recalls the time when the Israelites were supplied with food in the desert, and reminds us of the need to be God's hands and feet where we can to support those around us with their practical needs at this time.

The word fear (meaning reverence and profound respect in this context) crops up again at the end of the psalm as the starting point for wisdom, and our prayer is certainly for wisdom for all those who are making very hard decisions on a daily basis at the moment.

I may well choose to use the Psalms for an ongoing Wednesday series during the weeks ahead as they express the whole range of human emotion, but as with everything else at the moment that may change with the circumstances.

One thing we can all be doing more of as we are confined to our homes is praying, and to this end I include in the newsletter a Two-a-Day Prayer list I have been using for some time to pray for the life of our team of churches.

It is a work in progress and may be inaccurate or miss out some key activities or groups, but I offer it as a structured way of remembering and giving thanks for all that normally goes on within our team until such time as we are able to meet together again. I use it first thing in the morning as I get up and later on in the day before tea time but please make as much or as little use of it as you wish (and feel free to suggest edits or additions).

I hope you are all staying safe and well as far as you can, and my thoughts and prayers continue to be with us all during these unprecedented times. *With love in Christ, Andrew*

From Corsham Area Christian Churches

Dear All

We are now living in difficult times and need to use our Christian values to help protect those that are more vulnerable than our selves, but making sure to keep your selves safe, following the advice that has been given through the media.

The Lent courses have been postponed and will hopefully take place later in the year.

With a sad heart The Walk of Witness is also cancelled. We normally gather together with the Cross having Readings and hymns. This year the Gospel reading would be from Matthew V 26: The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus, to V 27: The Burial of Jesus. Maybe you can go for a walk stopping to thank what we have taken for granted, as times have changed. Pray for an improved future and all those that are helping to keep us safe.

If you have a cross that you could put up to remind us that this day our Lord Jesus Christ was put to death on the cross, if like me you keep your Palm cross that could be used. I hope this is helpful, may you all stay safe with the Love of the Lord around us. *Felicity Hamilton*

Readings for Wednesday 25 March 2020 **Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Collect: We beseech you, O Lord, pour your grace into our hearts, that as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his cross and passion we may be brought to the glory of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Old Testament Reading – Isaiah 7:10-14

New Testament Reading – Hebrews 10:4-10

Gospel Reading – Luke 1:26-38

Psalm 111 (NRSVA)

¹ Praise the LORD!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

² Great are the works of the LORD,
studied by all who delight in them.

³ Full of honour and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures for ever.

⁴ He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds;
the LORD is gracious and merciful.

⁵ He provides food for those who fear him;
he is ever mindful of his covenant.

⁶ He has shown his people the power of his works,
in giving them the heritage of the nations.

⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.

⁸ They are established for ever and ever,
to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

⁹ He sent redemption to his people;
he has commanded his covenant for ever.

Holy and awesome is his name.

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practise it have a good understanding.
His praise endures for ever.

If you would like to receive this update directly or include anything in the newsletter please send an email to: office@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk

DEADLINE for input is 9am on Wednesdays and Saturdays

Please keep checking the website for any updates and useful links (incl. Mothering Sunday services) at:
<https://corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk/news/newsletters/team-news/>

TWO-A-DAY PRAYER

C = Corsham, L = Lacock, N = Neston (where activities are parish-specific rather than team-wide [including Gastard and Bowden Hill as well])

Sunday

Morning: Clergy/lay ministers

Evening: Team vision - growing in God/in love/community

Monday

Morning: Contact with schools

Evening: Women's ministry - Ladies in Fellowship Together/Mothers' Union (C)/women's Bible study (L)

Tuesday

Morning: Contact with baptism families and wedding couples

Evening: Men's ministry – Men's Group (C)/Men's Breakfast (L)

Wednesday

Morning: Pastoral care - sick/bereaved/pastoral visitors/home communions

Evening: Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade (C)

Thursday

Morning: Parochial Church Councils/bubbles (C)/Team Council/church wardens and PCC secretaries

Evening: Pilgrim and Bible study groups/walking group/social events and fundraising

Friday

Morning: Worship leaders and supporters - readers/intercessors/servers/choirs/worship groups/organists/bell ringers/refreshment providers/sidespeople/eucharistic assistants

Evening: Messy Church (C)

Saturday

Morning: Admin/communication/safeguarding/finance (including treasurers)/fabric (church openers/graveyard maintainers/clock winders/cleaners/flower arrangers/register keepers/vergers)

Evening: Young Barts and Early Birds (C)/Junior Church (L)/Breakfast Service (N)

CLOSURE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS—Message from the Church of England

The Church continues to be alive and active, but our buildings must close.

We are seeing a huge increase in the number of people falling sick with COVID-19. We must distance ourselves from one another and prevent the spread of infection in order to save lives. Therefore, as well as public worship being suspended, all church buildings in the Church of England are now **closed**.

This means our **Foodbank points** are also unavailable and we encourage donations at the Co-op in Corsham and Sainsbury's in Chippenham. As far as food supplies are concerned, the things that we need are: **cereals, jam, long life juice and bottles of squash, individual puddings, tinned fish, tinned potatoes, tinned spaghetti e.g. hoops or similar, tea and coffee**. Volunteers are still required to help the existing team and if you could volunteer for the foodbank please get in touch with the church office. (office@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk)