

THE SOUTH WEST IPSWICH TEAM MINISTRY

The Church of England in South West Ipswich

Registered Charity Number 1171465.



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Dear Friends

As I write I am conscious that life is changing very quickly for all of us, and for some of us more than others. As a church we are trying to work out the best ways to respond and these will be developed over the next few days.

The starting point is the booklet attached to this letter, it is hoped that this will help sustain your spiritual journey over this period, we will update it as we move nearer to Holy Week and Easter and send additional resources.

On Sunday I was helping out at the parish of Tuddenham and Westerfield and I preached on a verse of the Gospel reading, ²¹*Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.'*

It is a reminder that while physically meeting together as the body of Christ is important and will become normal again. We are not tied to a physical building or space, but to a God who is alive and on the move. Praying while separated from one another is just as valid as sat in our favourite seat in a church building – even if we have sat in it for more years than we care to remember!

For those who are afraid right now Jesus promises us that he is always with us and says to each of us, our communities and our world, *'Do not be afraid, neither let your hearts be troubled trust in God and trust in me'*. While the world does at times appear to be going mad, we are rooted in someone that is timeless and his words are not hollow or empty. Rather they are rooted in the promises of Jesus who endured death on a cross and who rose again thereby giving to each of us hope. Hope in this world and hope in the next, and it seems to me that

SOUTH WEST IPSWICH TEAM MINISTRY COMPRISING:- ST MARY STOKE WITH ST PETER'S STOKE PARK AND ST FRANCIS
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this is part of the mission of the church at this time. To be agents of hope, to pray without ceasing for:

- ❖ Our political leaders
- ❖ Our health workers across the different departments
- ❖ Those who are sick (both those with COVID-19 and those who are undergoing long term treatment)
- ❖ Those who are lonely and isolated and struggling with their Mental Health

We are conscious that this is going to be a period of intense isolation for some and we will be creating a contact tree for each of the churches to enable us all to keep in touch with one another. This will start to happen over the next few days, and you will be contacted by someone from your church to ask if you wish to take part.

If you are in need of shopping or prescriptions being collected please ask as we are gathering a small group of people to help with this, for now please contact the office.

While it is not currently possible for members of the ministry team to visit you in your homes we are available for telephone conversations, in the short term the office will act as a reference point and put one of us in touch with you. Please ring or email to arrange this, in an emergency then please ring one of the staff team.

For those of you with internet access we will shortly be posting thoughts for the day, meditations and hopefully links to worship. We will be posting these to our website, Facebook page and our new Youtube channel; the links are below.

Above all during this difficult and challenging time please be assured of our prayers and we invite you to join us in praying from your home. The staff team will pray each day (Monday to Saturday) at 8.30 am; in addition a private Eucharist will be celebrated each Sunday at 10 am – this will take place behind closed doors as we cannot have people with us, no matter how well you are feeling. We will ring the church bell before each of these services to remind the community that we are still here and praying for them.

Finally, on Sunday 22nd March the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have called for a day of prayer for our nation, world and all who are affected by the COVID – 19 outbreak. One way of showing our solidarity is to place a lit candle in a window of your homes at 7 pm on Sunday [Please ensure that if you use a 'real' candle that it is in a suitable container, away from curtains and blinds, drafts and out of the reach of children and pets.

Know that this comes with my prayers and good wishes.

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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4gDoPAEFhKT2KF0IMELZOQ>

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.