



St Clement's Church, Cambridge

Pastoral Letter from Nick

21 March 2020

Dear friends

We live in extraordinary times and that requires extraordinary responses, not least in that loving our neighbour now requires us to keep our physical distance from them. For the most vulnerable that means more or less staying at home (to protect both ourselves and the strained resources of the healthcare system); for the rest of us it means avoiding all unnecessary physical social interaction.

On Tuesday our archbishops issued advice that all public services in churches should discontinue (except for funerals and weddings and those with very limited numbers attending); there will similarly be no small group meetings. But this does not mean that the Church of England as a whole, or St Clement's in particular, is closing down – far from it.

First of all, the church building will still be open in the daytime. There will be no public services but people are welcome to visit and pray. We will be taking the obvious precautions in terms of cleaning, and advise keeping social distance, but we are not being told to close our buildings – in fact we have been encouraged to keep them open. St Clement's will be open 12 noon to 3pm daily and either Father Robert or Jack Belloli, our pastoral assistant, will be around to pray and to talk (albeit at a social distance).

Secondly, we still intend to have our 11am Mass on Sunday morning – but it will not be a public service, those few in the church (4 or 5 people) will be the ministers of the service – celebrant, assistant and two cantors. You and any member of the public can however watch and listen to a livestream of the service – simply go to the church website (www.stclements.cambridge.org and follow the instruction there). Our technological wizards will be setting up and testing the technology tomorrow (Saturday) to enable this to happen.

Thirdly, we are aware that either in the short or longer term this is going to be an anxious time for many. The clergy now have remarkably empty diaries and, though mostly we will not be seeing people face-to-face, we do have telephones and would be delighted to hear from you for whatever reason. Fr Robert will be co-ordinating our pastoral response and has written a few words below. He will also be working on a weekly newsletter to help us all keep in touch.

The archbishops – together with other church leaders – have called for a national day of prayer on Sunday, including an invitation to light a candle of hope at 7pm that day, a reminder that 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' (John 1.5).

I am not afraid, and if ever I wobble I remind myself that 'the true light, which enlightens everyone' came in to the world' (John 1.9). I find that the practice of prayer – of gazing at the light – dispels the darkness, as does seeing the light of goodness and kindness in others, including you, dear friends.

The Lord protect and keep us in these coming days from all the 'fears and phantoms of the night'.

Grace and peace to you all, Nick

Addendum from Robert

I should like to amplify what Nick has said in his Pastoral Letter.

Open for prayer

From 12 until 3 each day the church will be open for private prayer. People will be asked to sit or stand at least 2 metres apart.

On the half-hours an individual will say respectively Morning Prayer, the Ante-Communion, Evening Prayer, according to the *Book of Common Prayer*; it will not be a public service, but will maintain the river of worship that has flowed through St Clement's for centuries.

We shall ring the Angelus at midday.

Sunday Mass – Spiritual Communion

We shall continue to have our Sunday Mass at 11 o'clock. But, as Nick has said, instead of forming a congregation in church, you are invited to participate via the internet, where it will be 'live-streamed'.

In participating in this way, you will be engaging in 'Spiritual Communion'. Thomas Aquinas defined this as 'an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him.' Spiritual Communion is commended in the *Book of Common Prayer*, which regards it as equivalent to physically receiving the bread and wine.

The Anchor

We shall produce a small weekly magazine, called *The Anchor*. Amongst other things it will include a lectionary (daily Bible readings), a person within the St Clement's family for whom to pray each day, a short reflection, plus as much news and views as people contribute. There will be an online and paper version.

Pastoral and practical support

We want to give pastoral and practical support to those in social isolation. This might taken the form of a weekly phone call to check all is well, plus any shopping, errands etc. We shall offer this both to members of the St Clement's family and to anyone else who wishes it.

Please help

If you are willing to help in any way with giving pastoral and practical support, and with producing *The Anchor*, please let me know:
robert@vandeweyer.co.uk.

We shall have a meeting at 10.30 this Tuesday morning to discuss all this. Please let me know if you can participate. We shall then let you know how to do so. If you cannot participate, but would like to help, again let me know

May God bless us and keep us, and make His face shine upon us.

Robert