

20th March 2020

Dear friends

We are living in unprecedented and uncertain times when many people are concerned and anxious as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. As we look to God, in repentance and faith, may we know Him as 'our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble'. (Psalm 46:1)

You may have heard already, through the media, that a statement has been issued to Church of Ireland parishes in the Province of Armagh, which includes the Diocese of Down and Dromore. The statement was issued following consultation with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Two of the key points of the statement issued by the Church of Ireland are that, until further notice, all parish organisations and activities should cease, and all Sunday and midweek services should be suspended.

Many people will be disappointed and saddened that we are unable to meet to worship, to sing, to pray, to hear and respond to the Word of God, to share in Holy Communion, to encounter and experience the presence of the Holy Spirit as we meet together and have the opportunity for fellowship and social interaction. However, we are planning to stream a short service on Sundays, via the internet. Further details will be available on the website and social media.

I will also celebrate Holy Communion each Sunday in Church at 9.00am. Parishioners are not to attend this service but, in their homes, are invited to read the Communion Service. An abbreviated HC Service is enclosed. HC Services can be downloaded via the Parish Website. (www.bchurch.co.uk) Although, parishioners will not receive bread and wine, by faith, they will receive the benefits of Holy Communion.

Whether you receive this letter by post or email, we are including an Order of Service for Morning Prayer and suggested Bible readings for use during March and April. In order to establish a sense of worshipping and praying together, albeit in a virtual way, a member of the team will lead Morning Prayer each weekday at 10.00am. Please do not come to Church for this service, but in your home, join with us as we say Morning Prayer together, or use the service at another more suitable time.

Other online resources are available at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/prayer-worship/book-of-common-prayer/2004-texts/texts>. There will be various services on TV and radio.

Pastoral Visiting is suspended, apart from exceptional circumstances. I and members of the team will endeavour to provide pastoral support by phone, including those who normally receive regular visits. Some parishioners are self-isolating, and I expect more will do so in the coming days. Please remember and look out for those who are elderly, vulnerable or self-isolating, phone or check up on friends and neighbours and make sure they have food and essential supplies. Please comply with the Government's isolation and general hygiene guidance.

Please contact the Parish Office (028 4062 2744/info@bchurch.co.uk) or phone 07933096720, if you, or someone you know, need support, help (including collecting/delivering essential supplies), would like to talk or would like someone to pray with you.

I want to assure you that I, members of the ministry team and others are praying for you. Please join us in praying for our world, our country, our community and our Church family. (See overleaf)

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Yours for the sake of Christ

Roderic