

Dear St Simon's,

I'm writing on behalf of the Wardens and myself to let you know some changes we need to make to life as a church family in light of the Coronavirus. But before we talk about practicalities, here are some verses from Colossians that we read earlier in the term. Paul writes:

"...we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love you have for all God's people – the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven..." (Col. 1v4-5)

Suddenly faced with our own mortality and a crumbling economy we need to remind ourselves more than ever of the **hope** stored up for us in heaven. Through and in Christ we are those who are eternally secure. When Christ rose from the dead, united to him spiritually, we also rose. Our lives really are now hidden in him (3v3). It is out of that hope which spring our faith and love.

So what will that mean for us as a church family?

First, in the fear let's be people of **faith**. People who entrust ourselves daily, not to statistics of survival, but to our Saviour Jesus Christ and to our Heavenly Father who loves us more than we can imagine. Pray lots. Fill your mind with the promises of God's word.

Second, sharing that hope of eternal life, let's **love** one another well, especially those who are most vulnerable. The following are all ways we can love one another at this time:

- 1. Hand washing.** Please take the trouble to arrive 5-10 minutes before a service or activity and wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- 2. Greeting one another.** We'll refrain from shaking hands or hugs during the peace and as we greet each other.
- 3. Communion.** Following Church of England guidelines, we'll be receiving only bread at communion for the foreseeable future.

Bread will be pre-cut and those presiding will wash hands before and after.

- 4. Care for the isolated.** If you have a new persistent cough or temperature, please stay at home. If you are ill or need to self-isolate let Robert Stephenson know (rastephenon1956@gmail.com, 01704 220685). Your CONNECT group leader will then be asked to coordinate looking after you during isolation (i.e. shopping, help with medicine, daily contact if required). If you're not in a CONNECT group, the Welcome Team will help look after you instead. Either myself or Rev David Towler are available to talk, pray and read the Bible with you over the phone if that would be helpful.
- 5. Live-streaming services.** We're currently looking into the best way of recording and live-streaming services for those who can't be with us temporarily on Sundays. For those without access to the internet, we hope to record an audio of the service onto CD.
- 6. Ongoing communication about activities.** As I'm sure you're aware, the situation is changing daily and we may need to reassess some of our activities. The "latest news" section of the church website will be the place to keep up to date, as will the new Facebook page (search for stsimonandstjudewithallsouls on Facebook). The Wardens, David, Robert and I will be meeting weekly to make decisions based on the latest national advice.
- 7. Speak of Christ.** Friends and family are scared and looking for hope. Let's take the chance to offer them Christ as the one who gives true and lasting hope.

Thank you for co-operating with us and undergoing some necessary and temporary change. In the midst of uncertainty and fear, we want to keep on meeting together as long as we can safely do so. We'll do that to encourage one another with our eternal hope; trusting our Saviour and loving one another well.

With much love in Christ,

Andy

(on behalf of Mike Molyneux and Elaine Killick, St Simon's Wardens)