

This Week at St Mary's

22 March 2020

SUSPENSION OF ALL SERVICES

I feel sure everyone will know that the Archbishops, following government guidance about non-essential contact, have advised that until further notice all public worship is suspended until further notice. All the indications are that this will be a number of months.

To say it's a strange time is to state the obvious. I doubt there has EVER been a time when such a drastic step has been taken, although during other 'plagues' such action will have been locally taken. For us all, there will be different ways we are experiencing how it feels to be unable to do much we take for granted, basic to human life, ie human contact, getting out and about with the everyday things.

For me, having led worship services for nearly 31 years, there is a void at the heart of my week. Something not only feels to be, but IS missing. My weekly rhythm and work has been significantly interrupted. I'm sure many of you will be feeling the same things. My son and his family in Italy unable to leave home are remarkably cheerful - helped I am sure by Granny reading the children stories by a video link. (I have made a small contribution too.)

As the Archbishops made clear, this is not the moment to shut up shop, rather it's a chance to seize the moment and to adapt. We are making a start this Sunday by (audio) 'live-streaming' a service at 11.00 which will remain on line thereafter. It's Mothering Sunday which we had been planning as an All Family Service and the theme, most appropriately as it turns out, is 'comfort in time of trouble'. Francis Shepherd has been amazingly energetic to get the technical side up and running, and I am sure it will all work perfectly! Simply go to our website and click on the link.

We want to make sure that everyone in the congregation has what they need at this time, so if you know of anyone who might appreciate our being in touch, please let us know. We also aim to keep the church open, allowing people to encounter the grace of God in St Mary's, a 'haven of peace and beacon of hope'.

Tom Gillman

Wherever you are, we extend a very warm greeting to you, especially if you've recently discovered St Mary's

**We are usually open between 10am and 3pm Mon-Sat
And on Sunday**

LAST WEEK AT ST MARY'S...

FRIDAY - visit by about 60 participating in the EASA (ecclesiastical architects) annual conference. Paul Sibly (former church warden) and Peter Rogan (architect) took them through our recent renovation projects. They'd also been to St Barnabas Cathedral and St Nics.

SUNDAY - at 1045, Tom reflected on the wonder of it is how St John in his gospel describes what God has done for us through Christ in terms of being our becoming married to God? The Samaritan woman story (John 4) opens this all up in an amazingly rich way.

At EVENSONG, Helen Hall reflected on being afraid in strange times is not a choice, but whether we surrender to the fear, or live with love and courage, IS a choice.

TUESDAY - news came that all worship suspended until further notice.

WEDNESDAY - the public consultation period in the process having passed, looking good to get faculty to restore and re-locate the Madonna and Child picture.

We hope you will come and spend time at St Mary's - and encourage others to do so. Continuing sensitivity in keeping a safe distance ('social distancing') and washing of hands on arrival essential.

NOW AND COMING UP SOON...

GREGORY JACKSON'S FUNERAL Monday 30th March. This will go ahead, but now only at Wilford Hill Crematorium. Guidelines now issued restrict attendance to only those with particular imperative to do so. Please liaise with Tom if you're hoping to come.

AND IN THESE NEW TIMES...

- **A POEM WHICH HAS PARTICULARLY SPOKEN TO YOU** - it would be really good if we could include in future editions of TWASM how a particular poem may have spoken to you - and continues to do so. Just send in 250 words max and we will include.
- **PRAYER DURING THE WEEK** - we will talk more of this, but we have an excellent opportunity to see how we as a church can develop our prayer life together. Modern communications open up excellent opportunities and there are a lot of resources available.
- **REFLECTION** - excellent one from Richard Rohr (Centre of Action and Meditation) is his daily meditations this last Thursday (19th March). These are free to sign up to.

We are in the midst of a highly teachable moment. There's no doubt that this period will be referred to for the rest of our lifetimes. We have a chance to go deep, and to go broad. Globally, we are in this together. Death is being forced on us by great suffering, which as I like to say, all leads to great love.

But for God to reach us, we have to allow suffering to wound us. Now is no time for an academic solidarity with the world. Real solidarity needs to be felt and suffered. That's the real meaning of the word 'suffer' - to allow someone else's pain to influence us in a real way. We need to move beyond our own personal feelings and take in the whole... Our feelings of urgency and devastation are not exaggeration; they are responding to the real human situation. We are not pushing the panic button, we are the panic button. We have to allow these feelings and invite God's presence to hold and sustain us in a time of collective prayer and lament.

Upcoming Services

Sunday 11.00 live-stream

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Please continue to pray for

Estelle Barks
John Bowers
John Conway
Harry Palmer
Mike Ridley

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