



Rev'd Canon Deborah Larkey

## THE VALE OF PEWSEY TEAM

Parish Churches within the Vale of Pewsey

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Churchwardens, members of PCCs and congregations,

You will be aware by now, with the risk of spreading coronavirus to people attending services, our Archbishops have temporarily suspended all Church services, in order to keep our people safe. You can read the important 'Guidance for Churches' on the Church of England website and I have included a helpful extract at the end of this letter. Please also refer to the Salisbury Diocesan website for updates.

The Archbishops are calling for a **National Day of Prayer this Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March**, which is also **Mothering Sunday**. Those who would like to, are asked to put a candle in their window as a sign of prayer at 7pm (safely lit, or an LED). Mothering Sunday is a very special day and we will miss the opportunities to celebrate and remember now that services are suspended. But our thoughts and prayers are especially with our Mothers, Grandmothers, Aunties, Godmothers and all those who care for us in a motherly way. We thank God for them and pray God will protect and bless them.

### **What we plan to do in The Vale of Pewsey Team in the days ahead:**

Our Clergy team have been meeting on your behalf. We have some Team guidelines we would like to share with you so that we can continue to be the local Church where we are, faithfully following the Lord Jesus Christ in obeying the prime calling of every Christian to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves (St. Mark 12: 28-31).

In keeping to national Church guidelines, we will be unable to provide normal services of worship in our buildings for the foreseeable future. But we will still be the Church, the body of Christ, seeking God's Kingdom in the Vale of Pewsey. To help us to do this and be faithful in our discipleship in difficult times, we will provide a wide variety of worship and prayer resources online and explore new ways of worshipping in word and deed.

With the help of God's Holy Spirit, we will keep a faithful praying presence in our communities and join together in prayer for the Church worldwide, for the Government and the nation. We will also be praying for those who work in our health and emergency services, for Schools affected by closures, for Teachers who may need to make provision for the children of keyworkers and those needing special care. We pray for families everywhere as they cope with these changes and the anxiety over finance and the future.

Already, our Lay Pastoral Assistants (LPAs) and Church members are joining with Parish Councils and other organisations in the villages to ensure that people are supported in this crisis. There are kind and imaginative ideas to check on neighbours and care for those self-isolating and for those who are vulnerable, the anxious and the lonely. This sense of being part of a caring community is encouraging and gives us hope for the times ahead.

We will be using our Team website much more to communicate with you, by putting Worship and Prayer resources online and Brenda is going to create an online 'Pew-sheet' for sharing information and for April we are also publishing the Messenger online. Do keep an eye on the Team website.

**In the weeks ahead (subject to on-going advice), the Clergy team encourage you to join us in our plan to:**

**1) Keep our Churches open for prayer**

There will be no services, but we can come in at any time for private prayer. It will be up to individual Churches to organising locking up or if in doubt, keep open overnight.

**2) On Sundays the Clergy will be aiming to pray in the following Churches at 11am:**

Mark Windsor to pray in Holy Cross, Wilcot  
Gerald Osborne to pray in St. Peter's, Milton Lilbourne  
Anne Mantle to pray in St. John the Baptist, Pewsey  
Deb Larkey to pray at St. Mary Magdalene, Woodborough (all at 11am)

**3) Clergy to pray in each Church during the week, Monday to Friday:**

During the week, the clergy plan to pray in Churches around the Team at 9am and at 5pm; they will ring the bell, so you know they are praying. Please feel free to join in with praying, wherever you are at home or at work etc, at one or more of the following times of day:

1. 9am
2. 12 noon (another time we might pray individually)
3. 5pm
4. Night Prayer (before sleep)

Please feel free to use orders of service to be found on the Team website (under links), or please use your own prayers or say the Lord's Prayer. As you know, prayers do not need to be long to be powerful, for we serve a powerful God who has promised to hear us when we pray and deliver us in times of trouble. We can pray arrow prayers like: 'Lord, please keep X safe, bless them and keep them' or 'Help Lord, protect X' etc.

NB: if you find yourself near a Church during any of the above times of prayer and wanted to pray with us, please sit at a safe distance (2 metres) and follow the hand sanitising routine.

4) **For Prayer requests, please contact the Team Office, the Clergy or be in touch with the Prayer Tree** – contact Pauline or Joan (see the Messenger for contacts)

5) **‘Phone visits’**

If you would value the chance to chat or share concerns on the telephone, please ring or email the Clergy team, or contact Brenda at the Team Office, or be in touch with Libby Turner, Pauline Dark and other LPAs listed in the Messenger. No doubt, our retired priests who play such an active and invaluable part in ministry will also help with ‘phone visits’.

6) **APCMs – advice to follow soon**

Most likely such gatherings will be postponed until later in the year, but we can explore online options.

7) **Funerals**

Funerals will be held, either in Church where safe distancing is being observed, or a Funeral at the graveside, or at the Crematorium. Families are beginning to consider having smaller family funerals with the option of a larger Thanksgiving/Memorial service later in the year.

8) **Baptisms and Weddings**

These too can go ahead, as long as safe distancing and hygiene are observed. However, some families are beginning to change their plans, postponing services because of the risk and because they want to be able to celebrate fully in better times.

If you have any questions, comments or good ideas, please let Brenda or the clergy know. We will keep you informed of any changes via the online ‘Pewsheet’ and the website.

With our prayers, love and thanks for your support in all of this

Deb Larkey, together with Mark Windsor, Gerald Osborne, Anne Mantle and Jennifer Totney

**Please note:** From the Church of England website:

## Guidance for churches

### What should churches do now?

*Please note that ‘Washing hands’ always refers to washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand-sanitiser with minimum of 60% alcohol content. See NHS guidance and download a poster version to display.*

1. **Pause normal meetings for worship** until further notice in line with Government Advice as a measure to help protect the most vulnerable.
2. **Consider keeping the church open** as a place for prayer and contact, with appropriate signage to remind people of the need to keep at least 2 metres apart.
3. **Explore other means of sharing ministry** including live streaming. See more information on this below.
4. **Encourage everyone to continue to maintain good hygiene** and observe social distancing if attending necessary meetings. Please provide hand gel at entrances and ensure there is a good supply of soap or hand gel in cloakrooms for hand washing. The best way of protecting us from the spread is for everyone to use **universal good hygiene**, - this means everyone, all the time, which will effectively disrupt the spread of the virus. Display the public information poster attached, which states:
  - **Catch it** – sneeze into a tissue.
5.
  - **Bin it** – bin the tissue.
  - **Kill it** – wash your hands.
  - **Do not touch your face** unless you've washed your hands.
6. Pastoral visits:
  - **In circumstances where people are self-isolating because they are symptomatic or have been in contact with someone who has been symptomatic**, no pastoral visits should be undertaken until their isolation ends. However, do offer phone support.
  - **In circumstances where someone is self-isolating for their protection and a pastoral visit is thought to be necessary**, please make sure you follow rigorous health and hygiene practices and maintain social distancing.
7. Ensure **good regular cleaning of surfaces people touch regularly**, including such things as door handles, light switches etc.