



Weekly News

Sunday 22nd March 2020

4th Sunday in Lent – Laetare Sunday

Knowing, loving and following Jesus

Parish Church of St Richard

Vicar: Fr Christopher Brading SSC

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Hon Assistant Priest: Fr Gordon Bond SSC

Deacon: Revd Canon Rebecca Swyer

www.strichards.co.uk

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A considerable number of people joined our Sunday Parish Mass yesterday by visiting the St Richard's Facebook page (including several people beyond our usual worshippers). Feedback has been very positive, with several people remarking how useful they found it. We therefore plan to broadcast all future Sunday Masses in a similar way, and the services of the Triduum.

Although not streamed, Mass will be offered in church every weekday and Saturday at 10:00 so, if you wish, you may join spiritually from home.

This Wednesday is the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, and Mass will be followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, which will conclude with the Lord's Prayer at 11:00; these will be streamed live. *Note: the Pope has called for all Christians to join in the recital of the Lord's prayer on this day.*

We have signed up to an audio conference room, which we will use to say morning/evening prayer together on selected days. We trialled it last week; it worked well and was easy to join and participate in. Details of how to join the audio prayer sessions can be found below; anyone is welcome to join in.

The church will continue to remain open for private prayer every day. Please cleanse your hands with anti-bacterial gel as you enter church and observe social-distancing guidelines (2m distance).

I was impressed with the response from the community for people to deliver Town Council leaflets (made via Facebook), most of the leaflets were delivered in a single day. I think it was good to be able to offer the use of the church entrance in this way – the Council certainly appreciated it.

Fr Chris

Worship at St Richard's

Mass There will be no 'physical congregations' at any masses until further notice, but the 10:00 Sunday Mass (and other Feast days) will be 'live streamed' onto the St Richard's Facebook page. There is a link to the page included in the email to which this document was attached. You will be taken to the St Richard's Facebook page, where the 'live stream' will appear. You do not need to have a Facebook account (you will be prompted to create one, but just click on 'Not now' under the green box. If you do have a Facebook account, you will be able to comment etc.

Morning/Evening Prayer On certain days (see table for details) we will make use of an audio-conferencing facility to say Morning or Evening Prayer together. To join in all you need is a regular telephone or mobile phone and calls are charged at usual network rates. If you also have Internet access you will be able to join in or follow the liturgy on screen. Accessing the audio conference is quite straightforward. You simply dial the number below. You will be asked to enter the conference room number, followed by the hash (#) key. Then you will be asked to enter the 4 digit PIN number followed by the hash (#) key. You will then 'enter the room'.

Audio conference numbers:

Dial: 03300 945 940

Room number: 55726788 #

Guest PIN: 2169 #

You can choose to just listen to the service and join in with the 'Amen's' etc. or if you have Internet access you can follow the words of the service. Visit the Church of England website www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer and scroll down to the appropriate time of day service. Instructions for the service will be given at the beginning.



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Worship at St Richard's this week

	Mon 23	Tues 24	Wed 25	Thu 26	Fri 27	Sat 28	Sun 29
9:00				M Prayer		M Prayer	
10:00	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass
10:30			Exposition				
17:00		E Prayer			E Prayer		
18:00					Exposition		

Services highlighted in **blue** will be streamed live on Facebook

Services highlighted in **red** will be said using the audio conference room

For private prayer, there are many resources available, including some suggested prayers for this difficult time on the CofE website.

Of your charity, please pray for, those in need:

Mimi Palmer, Jean Cavanagh, Fr Graham Francis, Hannah Hales, Paul Moore, Celia Avery, Christopher Grimwood, Linda Miller, Tom Miller, Claire Firrell, George Jobson, Ann Oddy, Stella Law, Doreen Sparks, Pauline Caffin, Fr John Edwards, Margaret Barter, Fr Brian Tyler, Adrian Taylor, Janice Long, Eddy Barrett, Maureen Surrey, Stewart Trafford, Pamela Waugh, Fr David Palmer, Sr Suzanne Grace, Fr Beau Brandie, Len Fowler, James Olsworth-Peter, Anne Williamson, Giancarlo Querolo, AD Fiona Windsor, Brian Wagger, Tony Costa, Barbara Liddington.

Those who have died recently:

Ted Padginton and John Scovell **and those whose anniversary falls around this time of year:**

21st) Alan Randall, John Powell,
22nd) Margery Irwin, 23rd) Marion Hutchinson,
24th) Jerome Poodhun, Anthony Webb-Bowen,
25th) Dudley Lerpiniere, 27th) Mary Young,
28th) Douglas Briant.

*If you would like anyone added to the prayer list, or would like someone prayed for, but **not** added to the list, please submit a prayer using the form on the website www.strichards.co.uk/prayer*

Supporting each other

Many thanks to the people who have already volunteered to help in any way they can, this includes a number of people from outside of our church family. A list of volunteers is being kept, and as tasks come up, people will be contacted to help. Please let Fr Chris know if you want to be added to the list of volunteers.

Our volunteers are rearing to go! This means that if you are self-isolating and cannot get out to the shops, or to the chemist, or are struggling in any way please contact Fr Chris, who will put you in touch with someone who can help.

You will not be being a burden, we all know that if you could help others, you would.

So please do not suffer in silence!

FSW

Not surprisingly FSW, and the disadvantaged families they support, need our help more now than ever. With the schools being closed, and therefore no free school lunches, families will need more food. In particular they need: non-perishable foodstuffs, toiletries, games, books, puzzles for children. Preferably in boxes, not plastic bags. If you have donations, but cannot get them to church, let Fr Chris know and someone will collect them.

Fr Chris' Homily – Sunday 22 March – Lent 4

Deacon Rebecca started her homily last Sunday by saying: "This past week has been a sobering one..." Well if the week before last was sobering, I can't think of a suitable word to describe last week.

So much happened so quickly; it felt to me like getting caught at sea in a sudden storm where anything that isn't securely lashed goes flying, and while the storm carries on we are left trying to get some sense of order, assess the damage for our particular ship and re-chart our course.

Friday was the Vernal Equinox when Spring officially started, and when I was out walking Murphy (our dog) it occurred to me how nature, all around us, is coming out of hibernation, things are literally springing to life.

Meanwhile it feels like we're being instructed to hibernate – and that's not natural for us. God made us in His image, and he is a God of tightly knit union and communion – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are social beings who, although it might not feel like it sometimes, need each other.

And we need to worship God, as the descendants of Abraham our Father in faith, it's in our DNA. How we worship God over the coming weeks is going to test us in many ways, not least our creativity and our flexibility. But worship Him we must.

I was somewhat challenged by an article I read this week in the New York Times, Mattia Ferraresi, an Italian Journalist, opening line was *'Religion is supposed to be a source of comfort in times of confusion and suffering. And yet everywhere you look, services are being suspended.'* His article talks about the tension between needing to worship God, and the necessity to adhere to advice from officialdom. And he raises the sorts of questions, I'm sure some of us have had these last few days, like: 'If bars are open for business, why can't the church be?' Well, that at least is now a moot point. But what are we to make of many of our forebears, who did risk everything, including their lives to worship God? The priests who, in the first world, didn't blink an eye before saying Mass,

the private and illegal Masses held during the Reformation, and today in the Far East, underground cells who risk their lives to meet in secret to give praise to God.

Is the church not being defeatist?

I think not, not least because, in those examples in the past, people accepted the risk of putting their own lives in danger. Today we could put other people at risk – and we don't have the right to do that! And as Ferraresi wrote: 'Holy water is not a hand sanitizer and prayer is not a vaccine.'

And even if the church is giving in too readily, at least it is doing it in unity! Leaders of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches have all spoken strongly in favour of taking every precaution possible. If not for ourselves, then for everyone else who we may effect – or even infect. And while on the subject of unity, we are all urged to place a candle in our windows this evening at 7 O'clock to show unity and most importantly to show that the light of Christ is burning in our communities.

So just how do we continue to worship God, and to grow spiritually? Church leaders around the world are urging the faithful to watch a Mass on TV or online. But it is hardly the same as being there. While celebrating Mass in an empty cathedral, the Archbishop of Milan remarked, 'the difference between the two is like sitting next to a bonfire and contemplating a picture of it'.

That maybe so, but I'm sure we all know how powerful a photograph can be, in the absence of a loved one. But it is not the same,

and we have to look at other ways as well, of how we can 'be church,' to use a well-worn phrase from the last couple of decades.

Over the next few weeks, we will try different ways of praying together and doing other things together, including making the best use of the technology available to us. So, one might say, rather than hibernating we will be 'cyber-nating'! But on top of that, we must also find the time to turn off the TV, radio and computer, and in the quiet, seek the silent presence of God, who is our rock and our refuge and who will not abandon us. Amen