

ST WILFRID PARISH CHURCH BOGNOR

The Vicarage
17 Victoria Drive
Bognor Regis
West Sussex
PO21 2RH

17TH March 2020

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) – PUBLIC WORSHIP TO BE SUSPENDED AT ST WILFRID PARISH CHURCH BOGNOR UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Dear church member,

I am writing to you at this very difficult time, following the press statement by our Prime Minister yesterday and further statements made by the Health Minister to the House of Commons, and after having received clear guidance from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and Bishop Martin of Chichester.

I want to recognise that this is a very unusual and painful time and to reassure you of my prayers for you. I am grateful for all that you are doing to care for those around you.

As the world faces the challenge of coronavirus, and as the Government has asked every individual and every organisation to rethink its life, the Church of England in all its parishes has been asked to consider how to minister and serve those in their care in a new way.

Therefore public worship will have to stop for a season and our usual pattern of Sunday services and other mid-week gatherings must be put on hold. Whilst at the moment this does not include baptisms, funerals and weddings, it is with regret that significant restrictions have been put in place regarding these services. We are sorry that only the member of clergy and those immediately involved in the service may be present. We recognise the pain this may cause.

The Archbishops have stated that:

‘Being a part of the Church of England is going to look very different in the days ahead. Our life is going to be less characterised by attendance at church on Sunday, and more characterised by the prayer and service we offer each day. We may not be able to pray with people in the ways that we are used to, but we can certainly pray for people. And we can certainly offer practical care and support.’

As the country comes to terms with the reality of this unprecedented moment in our history, so as a church we must rise to the opportunity of being a people of HOPE. We must be those who are absolutely connected with the pain and suffering around us, but confident of the glorious hope that is to come: When our Saviour will return in glory, creation will be renewed and all pain and sorrow and suffering will cease.

We must also be a people who proclaim the glorious truth that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We can be reassured that whatever the path we are walking along we have no need to fear because God is with us; like a good shepherd, comforting and guiding us.

At St Wilfrid we will be closing the church office for the foreseeable future, and I would encourage all enquiries to either be made via email (office@wilfrid.com or joel@wilfrid.com) or by phoning The Vicarage (01243 930183). Unfortunately we will also be suspending all other church related meetings until further notice.

Please do be in touch with me on the number above should you require any assistance or would simply value a listening ear.

I enclose an outline for daily worship which you may find useful and I invite you to participate in a National Day of Prayer this Sunday (22nd March). As one action, you may like to join others in placing a lighted candle in your window at 7.00pm as a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished.

In Christ and with love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Mennie', written in a cursive style.

Joel Mennie, Vicar