**United Benefice of Waverton,**

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18th March 2020

Dear Church Member

Grace and peace to you all at this time. May you all know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

In the light of the Coronavirus pandemic, I am writing to outline the status of Church life and the key points of the St. Peter’s Continuity Plan which has been developed by the Rector, Churchwarden and Assistant Wardens. Since we find ourselves in anxious times it is good to start with some words from Scripture.

***1****God is our refuge and strength,
    an ever-present help in trouble.****2****Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
    and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,****3****though its waters roar and foam
    and the mountains quake with their surging.*

***4****There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
    the holy place where the Most High dwells.****5****God is within her, she will not fall;
    God will help her at break of day.****6****Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
    he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

***7****The Lord Almighty is with us;
    the God of Jacob is our fortress.* (Psalm 46:1-7)

On Monday 16th the British Government announced that those over 70 and those with the most serious underlying health conditions must be largely shielded from social contact for around 12 weeks, and that if just one person in a household has a persistent cough or fever everyone living there must stay at home for 14 days. On Tuesday 17th, the Church of England issued a statement to the effect that all public services should be suspended till further notice. But they also added that this does not mean we are ‘closed for business’. This means we have to do church in a different way.

Indeed, for St. Peter’s Church, it creates new opportunities. For some, it will mean showing Christ’s love in practical ways; for others it will be a time of self-isolation and the need to receive God’s grace and love and help from others. In reality, for most of us, one day we may be offering help; another day we may be receiving help. In both situations we will need wisdom, endurance, grace and courage. Because for all of us this virus brings many legitimate concerns and uncertainties. But let us hold onto this: *the God of Jacob is our fortress*.

**ST. PETER’S CONTINUITY PLAN**

***Fellowship***

With the need for self-isolation, there will be great need for fellowship over the next few weeks and months. To this end, let me encourage people to keep in touch. There are 2 ways you can keep in touch with us:

1. The ‘St. Peter’s Church Waverton’ Facebook Page. Through this, we will post messages of encouragement and support, prayers, psalms, Bible verses, etc. (Also see below for live-streamed services through Facebook).

2. The WhatsApp Prayer Group. This is for those who wish to offer prayers for loved ones and pray privately for others. It does, however, need a Smartphone. If you would like your name added, you will need to phone Lorraine on 335331 and she will explain how to set it up.

***Worship***

Now that church services are suspended, we will not be opening church until further notice. While we may not be able to gather together in body, we can meet in spirit and electronically. To that end, I am trying to prepare for a Sunday service of Morning Prayer on Facebook Livestream (and maybe also one midweek). We will aim to send out (by email or post) a sheet with the words for everyone to follow at home with the daily readings.

We would therefore encourage church members to sign up to Facebook if they are not already signed up and to search for St. Peters Church Waverton, and then ‘Like’ us and ‘Follow’ us. This will mean you get alerts announcing upcoming Livestream services.

***Private Devotions***

There are also many resources online for private devotions. For example, I would encourage people to use the Daily Prayer (from the Church of England website) at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>.

If you wish to listen to some contemporary Christian music, a friend of mine has just made his music freely available at <https://mattsearles.bandcamp.com/?fbclid=IwAR21Ws7e-eKsy2ZUzyf0_jxnZP5kgclgdpJUDafxHnerehvGg7jhBIYv9Ws>.

I will try to provide other resources as we go.

***Pastoral Care***

Finally, it is our hope to support everyone in our church family. While the “Waverton Action Plan” is already in place providing general help across the village, we want to offer the additional support of the Church Family. To that end, we are setting up a system of keeping touch by phone (just checking to see if you are doing OK, if you need someone to go shopping for you, or a visit from the Rector). We will try to keep this going for as long as our own volunteers are healthy enough.

In Christ

Revd Jules Beauchamp