



## A message from the Rector of St Pancras Church, Chichester - 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Most of you will have heard by now that following the latest Government advice the Church of England is suspending all Church services until further notice. This means that all Sunday services at St Pancras **and** all mid week activities (including youth activities) are now suspended.

This is a hugely significant step and one that will cause many of us great sadness and concern. It was a decision effectively taken by others but one that we believe we must comply with. Please pray that the effects of this virus are less severe than predicted and that the scientists are given great wisdom in how they react.

Over the past few weeks the staff and wardens have been thinking about how best to respond to this situation from the perspective of our church community. I want to outline some of the things we are hoping to implement in the coming days. Simply because we are not able to gather together physically on a Sunday doesn't mean that St Pancras Church has ceased to exist. We will be actively working to build our sense of community even though we are not able to meet each other as we usually do.

### Online Sunday worship

I will be writing to you later in the week to explain how you can participate in Sunday worship with St Pancras church family while staying at home. Using an online conferencing platform we hope to be streaming worship on Sunday morning via YouTube and Facebook. **This Sunday at 10.00am there will be a live Morning Service you can watch.** I will be leading the service, Mike will be preaching, Alex leading the music and Darren will be addressing the Children. This means that we will all be able to worship together in real time while remaining in our own homes. Churches in Wuhan found this very helpful during their lockdown and we hope that it will be a great blessing to us. In time as we grow in confidence others will be invited to contribute. We hope to launch an online mid week Bible study and a prayer meeting in due course as well.

### Children and Youth

We are assuming that Schools will be shut down shortly and many families will go into lockdown. Darren our Youth Minister has been planning various online ways to engage with our children. He will be doing a live worship exercise video **Monday to Saturday mornings at 10am** and a **fun Bible teaching session Monday to Saturday at 4pm** via Facebook. He will be contacting parents directly about this. If you are young at heart you can join in as well – why not log onto the St Pancras Church Facebook page?

### Ministry among the homeless

All church meals for the homeless, as they currently operate across the City, will cease this Friday. However HEART (Chichester churches homeless charity) will be using St Pancras as a centre to distribute breakfasts every day of the week. Rather than staying empty in the coming months our Church building will be used

to store food, enabling hot food to be handed out from the door of St Pancras Church every day of the week between 9am and 10am to some of the most vulnerable in our society.

All 70+ volunteers cannot be used, so we do need more volunteers, please let the office know if you are willing to help. Staff from St Pancras and Revelation Family Church will also be participating in this.

### Pastoral care

Perhaps the biggest concern is the sense of isolation that the current restrictions will cause many people. The loss of contact and the fear of running out of supplies are very real. Of course we are limited in what we can do and pastoral visiting is now effectively ruled out. **That said we intend to offer pastoral care by the telephone:**

- All church members (registered on iKnow who have given us permission to ring them) will be allocated a staff member to keep in touch with them. We envisage staff contacting all parishioners by phone every few weeks.
- The Pastoral team will keep phone contact with parishioners as well; especially those who might feel very isolated or have health issues.
- It is helpful for us to know who is self isolating and the Office will keep a record of this. **If you need additional support please let us know.**

### Keeping in touch

Although we are closing the Office, Mary Ann our Administrator will be working from home. We won't be producing a newsletter but we will produce a weekly email – sharing news and updating the congregation with prayer requests and what the Staff are up to. Please email Mary Ann if you want something included. Emails to the current Office email address will be picked up, but you may want to switch to [st.pancs@gmail.com](mailto:st.pancs@gmail.com) as it will be easier for staff to access these at the moment.

The Church has two Facebook accounts, one public and the other restricted to church members. **If you have not asked to join the members group now would be a good time to do so.** Search in Facebook for : St Pancras Church Members.

### And finally...

These are difficult and disturbing times. As Christians we can draw strength from the fact that we have submitted our past, present and future to the Lord Jesus. The coronavirus is a reminder to us that we are not sovereign over our own lives. The Bible proclaims that: **Jesus is before all things and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17).**

Realising our smallness and vulnerability is at the heart of what it means to trust in Jesus. And of course our hope is invested in the One who sustains the Universe, and who loves each one of us more than we could possibly imagine.

With love and prayers

Mark