



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Stratton Team Ministry
St Leonard's Church, Stanton Fitzwarren
St. Margaret's Church, Stratton
St. Mary Magdalene Church, South Marston

Seeking, Sharing and Serving God Together

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

As most of you will now know we have been asked by the Government to shut our doors again. It is different from last time as we will be able to be open for private prayer, to record our online service and for funerals.

I know this news has been met with sadness but we need to do our part to restrict the advance of this virus. Our Arch Bishops and the Bishop of London have written to all clergy expressing their support and gratitude. They have decided to support the Government strategy, saying that they believe the best way we can serve our nation now is by pouring our energy into doing the things that we can do, which is to pray and to serve. They are asking us to abide by the law, however they will be challenging the Government on their decision.

They are calling us to prayer and fasting for our nation, below is an extract from the letter:

“Bearing in mind our primary vocation as the Church of Jesus Christ to pray and to serve **we call upon the Church of England to make this month of lockdown a month of prayer.** More than anything else, whatever the nation thinks, we know that we are in the faithful hands of the risen Christ who knows our weaknesses, tiredness and struggles and whose steadfast love endures for ever.

Above all we recall people to some of the fundamental spiritual disciplines that shape our Christian life. How we do this is up to each congregation and clergy person. We will publish resources to support you before the first day of lockdown. During the first lockdown we cheered for the NHS every Thursday. During this second lockdown we invite you to fast in a way appropriate to you as well as pray for our nation every Thursday, for its leaders, its health and essential services and all those who suffer.”

On a personal note I want to say how saddened I am to have to close our churches after such a short time here. I have done my best to get to know you in spite of masks and other restrictions. You are an amazing church family, full of joy, welcome and resilience which I am sure will help sustain you through this difficult time. I encourage you to look out for one another as you did last time and to keep in touch with us as we will endeavour to do so with you. I want to share with you the words that I hastily added to my sermon late Saturday night:

‘Today in our last service in church for a little while,
I look out and see a church filled with saints.
It feels devastating to receive the news that we cannot meet together on a Sunday.
I want to encourage you with a quote the words of our Queen in her address to the nation near the beginning of lockdown.

PRIEST IN CHARGE: Reverend. Elveen Mead



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She said 'Never give up, never despair the streets are not empty but filled with love and care that we have for each other.'

Our churches won't be empty they will be filled with love.

Our God is bigger than the news
Our God is bigger than a lockdown
Our God is bigger than this virus
Our God is bigger than this building

Barbara Glasson, President of the Methodist Church said this

'We are not people of fear,
We are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety
We are people who protect our neighbour's safety
We are not people of greed
We are people of generosity
We are your people God,
Giving and loving
Wherever we are
Whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
Wherever you call us.'

I have only been here a short time and I'm still getting to know you. But what I do know is that you're a community of love and hospitality.
You already have God shining through you.

That doesn't stop just because we can't meet for an hour each week.

We can and God willing we will get through this

As God's people we are called for such a time as this, to shine in the darkness in spite of our own fears
Like the saints we aren't perfect but with God's help we will shine.'

I will be taking up the call to pray and to fast each Thursday that we are in lockdown. I intend to offer Compline on facebook at 9pm Thursday evening during lockdown beginning with 5 November, it would be wonderful if you would join me.

Stay safe and healthy,
Blessings
Rev'd Elveen

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