



St. Matthew's Church
the Parish of Edgeley & Cheadle Heath
belong + serve + tell + grow



The Revd. David Brewster ~ 07548 716 512

Dear St. Matthew's Church Family,

As we enter Holy Week, the third week of this very strange time, I wanted you to know that not only I, but a whole host of people are praying for you. And all you who received our *Home Church Pack* a couple of weeks ago have five names of people for whom you are praying.

Prayer is always vital, but at this time it seems all the more urgent.

As most of us find ourselves intimately effected as family and friends are struck down by the COVID19 virus, and some die, we have a choice. We can retreat into despair and fear and that's a natural response. Or we can do what is actually quite unnatural, but what Jesus calls us to, and that is **trust**.

Trust that in all that we are facing at the moment our heavenly father can be trusted. Trusted with our family and friends; trusted with those who are sick or who have died; trusted with the practicalities of our isolation; trusted with our present and our future; trusted that he has good things prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9; Psalm 23:4-6).

One of the suggestions of how to build mental health resilience in our new way of living is to build routines. Can I encourage you to put prayer at the heart of these new routines? One of the Psalms set for morning prayer this Saturday was Psalm 127. It reminds us that unless we are cooperating with what the Lord is building, then all our effort is wasted. God isn't absent or taken by surprise by this present crisis. He is present and working. Our responsibility is to put ourselves in a place where we can connect with what he is doing, and we do that in prayer.

I know some of you struggle with the idea of prayer. How can prayer make a difference, especially when sometimes our experience might suggest that it doesn't? How can God be interested in my concerns? Those are good questions and worthy of a bible study some time.

For now, can I encourage you to put aside any scepticism and give it a go. Many of us find that when we pray, surprising things happen and that when we don't, they don't. If you receive unexpected answers to your prayers, let us know so that we can encourage each other.

On Sunday 22nd March, the Archbishops invited us to light a candle and place it in a window visible to the street as a prayer for our streets, nation and the world. Bishop Keith has encouraged us to continue the practice. This week he wrote, *"If you want a focus for prayer for this time, a prayer our whole country could use, please go to Psalm 121 – 'I lift my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth'"*. This is a simple way of beginning to grow our prayer lives, so please join me in this at **8pm this Sunday night**.



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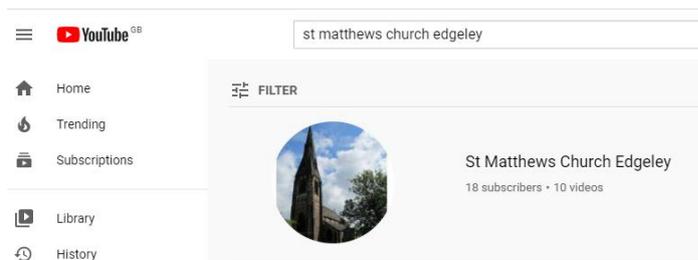


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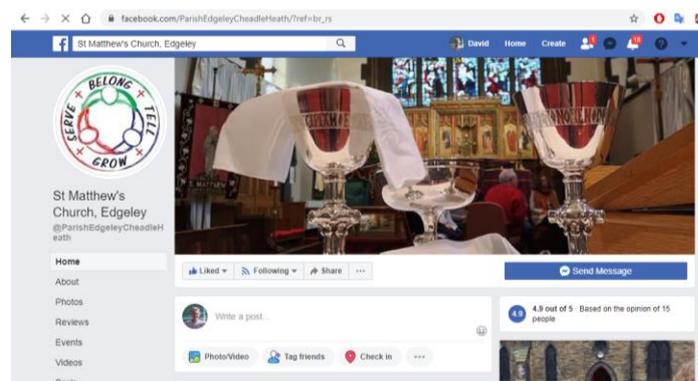
I know that not all of you are connected to the internet, and even if you are, some of you have decided not to participate in what one of our congregation calls anti-Social Media. Where we can we will continue to post paper copies of *Home Church* to you.

For those of you who have access to the internet via a computer or smartphone, can I encourage you to make full use of these ways of connecting to each other.

Our services, including hymns, will be available on YouTube. Search for St. Matthew's Church, Edgeley to find our channel. Then click on the playlist for the Sunday.



We will be posting daily on our Facebook page so can I encourage you if you have not already got an account, to sign up. It's not hard, and it is a great way to keep in contact and have conversations. You don't need to post anything yourself and you can set your privacy settings so that no-one can gain any information about you.



We will put our home produced material on our website, so that if you lose this letter / email, you can find it there.

Finally, the *Church of England* have produced some really good apps for Smartphones including, Daily Prayer and Time to Pray, these are available from the App Store and Google play (some of the content is available on the church of England website if you only have a computer).

On Sunday, the Bishop of Manchester will be leading a service broadcast on local radio stations. On BBC Radio Manchester this will be on the Mike Shaft Program. You can also watch this at 9am at <https://www.churchofengland.org>

If you have a particular need or just want a chat, please feel free to call me.

For now, take care and God bless.