

Last month I wrote about helping and caring for others in our community. Since then, the outbreak of coronavirus has really started to have an effect upon Europe and upon people in our country. The Government is saying that it expects the impact in this country to peak in 10-14 weeks time and it may even be affecting us for some months after. The need to help and care for others is, therefore, even more important.

The message that we were taught by Jesus, when he simplified 'the Law', was to love the Lord your God and love your neighbour as yourself. Now is a good time to put that second bit into practice. And in practice what that means is: if you'd want someone to help you if you got ill, then you should help others if they get ill. We can help others, we can care for others, by picking up the phone and speaking to them: "Are you okay? Do you need anything? Shopping, medication? Can I get you anything?"

I met with the benefice churchwardens mid-March to discuss precautions and contingencies that we need to put in place. As a church we are also looking at how we can best play our part in supporting the wider community, especially those who are self-isolating and those who are most vulnerable. In particular we are working on how we might provide food deliveries. In anticipation of growing demand, we may put out a plea for gifts of dry food, which can be dropped in boxes in St George's Church, but we'll publicise that if the need arises.

After the church service this morning, I had a fortuitous meeting with a parishioner and we were speaking about how to care for those who might be feeling even more vulnerable at the moment. Their idea - I can't take the credit - is simple: if every one of us in the village were to care for our immediate neighbour on our left and on our right - contacting them at least once a week (by phone if they're worried about close contact) - then the whole village is being cared for. We will know when someone, particularly if they live alone, is having difficulties and needs help. So firstly, can you please take this idea on board.

You will have heard, I'm sure, the Prime Minister's announcement that everyone must stay at home, except for a very few essential reasons, and churches are to close with immediate effect. This we are doing for all the right reasons but, of course, with a heavy heart. These are extraordinary times. The church doors will remain locked for now but during this time it is important that you know that prayer is still happening every day. Details can be found on the Church website.

Revd David Commander, Rector