

Dear Church family,

This morning we prayed and worshipped God together as a staff team, it was hugely encouraging. We are finding that God's truth and hope shine more clearly and brightly in a crisis. We also recognise that uncertainty causes confusion and confusion can become a seed bed for fear, so we wanted to bring you the clarity that we can at this time, as we choose faith, hope and love, instead of fear, cynicism and self-centeredness.

We will be sharing more vision and spiritual reflection on our response to this virus in the coming days, the purpose of this message is to give you a practical update on our plans at St. Chad's. Last Monday the PCC authorized the staff team to make the day to day decisions through the challenges of Corona-virus. This morning we made the choice that for the foreseeable future our way of being church together will be radically different as we navigate this pandemic together. This afternoon the Archbishops have taken the same approach for the CofE nationally.

Having worshipped and prayed together, the ministry staff team considered the criteria for decisions about what to continue and what to cancel. Those criteria were:

- Protection of those who are most at risk.
- Following Government, Public Health and National Church of England guidelines, particularly re: social distancing.
- Assessing the purpose and age demographics of any gatherings we continue.
- Choosing to wait, where we don't yet have enough clarity to make a decision.

#### **What we have decided.**

Since our staff meeting, the Archbishops of Canterbury & York have called for suspension of public worship and a call to worship and pray radically differently. Consequently, there will be no services in St. Chad's building on Wednesdays or Sundays with immediate effect, in line with the CofE guidelines.

(<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>)

Tomorrow we will make a plan for live streaming our Sunday services. The church building will be open for private prayer from 11-11.30am on Wednesday and we will look at other possibilities for this at other times in the week.

The following one-off events have been postponed. We will communicate with those who have already booked, where applicable.

- Quiz night
- Temple days
- Cinema night
- The Living Free conference in May
- Later Life Issues
- The weekend hub gathering

The following events have been suspended until further notice.

- Schools Out, Break Out, Hang Out
- Prampushers & Just4Dads
- Oasis
- Men Behaving Dadly

We are looking at ways for the following events to be accessed digitally.

- Sunday worship
- Wading through marriage

#### **Decisions to be made at a later date.**

- Our Easter services
- The APCM

The LifeCentre Trustees and Management will be meeting this evening to consider immediate plans for the LifeCentre.

#### **Responses and Responsibilities**

Having made decisions on our events and services, the staff team then looked at what it will mean for us to be church in a radically different way in the coming weeks. We looked at this in the following categories: Pastoral Care, Mission, Teaching/prayer, Youth & Children.

#### **Pastoral Care**

This is an opportunity to show the love of Jesus and serve one another, that includes both church family and our local community. We want to minimise loneliness and offer practical support for immediate necessities for those who are vulnerable or isolated. Katie is going to lead a team with Lesley (Life Centre), Jane (church office) and Ann and Neil Russell (our pastoral visitors) to consider the many suggestions of coordinating care in this way. More details will follow. We need to share this out amongst us, so please consider what you can offer first to your neighbours and secondly to contacts within the church family. We are committed to St. Chad's being at the heart of Romiley, serving the vulnerable and making connections to facilitate this. If you have a heart to be involved in this please email [office@stchadsromiley.co.uk](mailto:office@stchadsromiley.co.uk)

#### **Mission**

It is a time of great uncertainty; many people are afraid. It is also a time when people will have big questions about God, life & death and many other things. As followers of Jesus, we have hope, we have life and we have the best story to tell. So Will is going to lead our ministry looking at ways to be present to our community (digitally), and available to help those who are leaning in, to have space to explore faith and ask questions. We have lots of ideas about this and real expectation that in the midst of change, the Holy Spirit will be at work, please pray for this. When our church building is closed, the church is still the church and spread out further bringing the kingdom. If you have a heart to be involved in this please email [will@stchadsromiley.co.uk](mailto:will@stchadsromiley.co.uk)

#### **Spiritual life**

Over the coming weeks, many of us will find ourselves with more time on our hands and socially distanced. As well as opportunities to serve our neighbours, we have opportunities to grow deeper in God and grow in our prayer lives, please don't waste this opportunity. One thought I've had as church leader was 'if my whole church went on retreat for a month, what could happen?'. The difference between loneliness and solitude is to some extent a matter of perspective, what might God want to do in your life in this season? Richard will be coordinating a flow of resources to feed our souls, minds and empower us to pray in this season. If you have a heart to be involved in this please email [richard@stchadsromiley.co.uk](mailto:richard@stchadsromiley.co.uk)

#### **Youth & Children**

More family time! Another key aspect of church changing how we do things, will be in line with another key value which is that discipleship of our children and young people is shared in the home and in church. These changes will place more emphasis on parents' involvement in our children's discipleship. Elle is

excited about ways she can help facilitate that and will be producing resources and ideas to make the most of this opportunity.

### **Communications**

For many years, connection and belonging have been key values of St. Chads, that continues in a different way, making the most of digital media. We are committed to keeping you as up to date as we can, a core part of Richard and Jane's role in the coming weeks will be sharing information. We won't be sending a daily briefing, but regular updates to the whole church family will come from email. We will use the church Facebook page regularly too and encourage you to follow that if you are on Facebook. Some of our church family aren't online, so part of our pastoral care network will be to deliver key messages to them on paper (by hand hygienically!)

Other things to mention on communications are that we believe phone calls can often be better than text messages and waiting for clear messages from the church leadership is far better than rumour or assumption!

This Sunday one of the passages I will be preaching on (live streamed!) is this:

*Even though I'm separated from you geographically, my spirit is present there with you. And I'm overjoyed to see how disciplined and deeply committed you are because you have such a solid faith in Christ. - Colossians 2:5 (Passion Translation NT)*

This will be a very strange season for us all, there are very real challenges which we face better together. We are also hopeful, doing church differently for a while can also be creative, enable new opportunities and we are praying for the Holy Spirit to move powerfully in this season.

With love and every blessing

The St. Chad's staff team and wardens.