

Letter from the Vicar

Thursday 7 January 2021

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

So... the inevitable Lockdown 3.0 is upon us. The infection rate, particularly in this part of the country, is very high and the Government believe it is necessary for us to stay at home with schools (other than nurseries) closing, non-essential shops closing, and a work from home order where at all possible. It is pleasing that the Government has recognised the steps that churches and faith communities have made to ensure extremely high levels of Covid security and thus have not mandated that Public Worship must cease. However, as a Parish, the decision has been made to suspend Public Worship with immediate effect for the foreseeable future. This was a painful decision to make as (I'm sure you know) I believe very strongly that all who wish access to the Sacraments of the Church are not denied them. However, my duty to you all is to offer the best pastoral care that I can and in line with this I believe it would be irresponsible of me to maintain a physical, collective worshipping presence for the time being.

There were many compelling reasons that led me and the Standing Committee of the PCC to come to this decision not least the order to *stay at home* unless absolutely necessary. Whilst folk have been good at not mingling in church we have been less successful in abstaining from conversations outside and this, coupled with the ferocity of the new variant, formed another compelling reason to suspend services. Another reason relates to the willingness and availability of volunteers to "staff" our services. Although I would be prepared to carry-on offering public worship it is not responsible of me to demand others turn-up for particular duties and potentially put themselves at risk. After weighing-up all these strands the decision was unanimous.

We are therefore moving again to online/virtual worship and will be making available our Parish Eucharist from 8.00am on Sunday mornings although you can join at any time thereafter. This, along with the Order of Service, Hymns, Readings, Sermon, and Newsletter, can be found at <https://stjohnsboxmoor.org.uk/suspended-services-resources/> For those who are without internet or computer facilities, the Church of England has maintained its phone-in Service – Daily Hope – and can be joined by calling 0800 804 8044. You can also find on the link above a short and simple service of Compline which you might like to use at the end of each day. It is a restorative and contemplative service. An Order of Service accompanies it although you can simply press 'play' and immerse yourself in it.

Although Public Worship is now suspended throughout the Parish (except for Funerals) St John's remains open each day for Private Prayer and it will be from there that we will broadcast our weekly services. I hope you will feel able to pop-in from time to time and just sit or be in God's presence.

I had dearly hoped I would not need to write this letter but with the rapid rise in infection and the Government's latest announcement my hope has been dashed. I will endeavour to be in contact with as many as possible over the coming weeks and hope and pray that our 'buddy' system is helpful in maintaining connection. Do please feel free to drop me a line (contact details below) should you feel need. In a bid to keep us connected we will be continuing our weekly Wednesday morning Zoom Coffee Morning at 11.00am for anyone who wants to join, and our monthly Thursday evening Happy Hour. If you would like to join you would be most welcome – please request the link from me. The next Happy Hour will be next Thursday evening (14 January) at 8.00pm.

In my Letter last week I expressed great hope for the coming year. Speaking for myself that hope is still there although it has taken a little battering in the last 48 to 72 hours. Who would have thought

The United States of America would face what is tantamount to a coup? My thoughts and prayers are with the American people as they try to reconcile their divided communities and heal the wounds of prejudice and political hatred. But as always you too remain very much in my prayers. Keep safe; keep positive; keep warm; and remain steadfast in faith that God loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,



The Reverend Michael Macey

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