

Letter from Revd Thomas Wharton

Dear friends,

Life has changed for all of us and very suddenly. These are unusual and testing times and we are all being asked to do what seems so unnatural to us – to social distance and keep physically apart from each other. We know however that by doing this we are not only protecting ourselves but protecting others.

Despite the unknowns and challenging times ahead, we will continue to work together, support each other and find new ways of living and sharing our faith while the Coronavirus is with us. We are privileged to be people of faith, hope and love and in these challenging times how important this will be for all of us.

Following the latest guidelines from the Church of England we have now suspended all public services of worship. Unfortunately that means no public may attend Sunday or midweek services at the Abbey or St. Swithun's. The Abbey choirs are also suspended until further notice.

But prayer and worship continues in the Abbey and we invite you to join us online for services which are live streamed.

Temporary Daily Service Times from the Abbey

The following daily services will be said privately in the Abbey but you can join us for any live streamed services online.

Daily

9.15am	Morning Prayer
12pm	The Lord's Prayer
5.30pm	Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer

On Sundays

9.30am	Sunday Eucharist with hymns and address (live streamed)
12pm	The Lord's Prayer
5.30pm	Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer

Before each service the Abbey Bell will ring to remind us that prayers are being said for the community and wider world. Also we are happy to say you will still hear the Abbey bells ringing before Sunday services. (This thanks to the 'Ellacombe' apparatus which has been recently restored and allows one person to ring all bells. Canon Ellacombe originally designed his apparatus in 1821 so he could sack his unruly and drunken bellringers at Bitton in Gloucestershire!).

The Abbey will remain open every day as a place of hope, peace, and prayer between 10am and 5pm. Please do not come into the Abbey if you feel unwell, and if inside the Abbey please observe social distancing from others.

To join us for live streamed services visit www.romseyabbey.org.uk/webcasts or find the link on the homepage (romseyabbey.org.uk). Previous streamed services can be viewed for a limited period. If you have any difficulty accessing the live stream please contact the parish office 01794 513125.

Prayer requests during daily Evening Prayer at 5.30pm

If you would like to send any prayer requests to be included in our daily service of Evening Prayer please send them

By text or voicemail: 07395 883652

By email: sayoneforme@romseyabbey.org.uk

Supporting each other in challenging times

It is all the more important that we offer each other support and help as far as possible, especially as many of us will find ourselves self isolating and cut off from normal day to day contact.

We are currently in the process of

- a) seeking volunteers who would be willing to offer support by making telephone calls to those who are staying at home and / or offering practical support where possible
- b) setting up a system whereby members of our congregation and visitors to the Abbey are able to request help and support.

If you would like to offer help in any of these ways then please contact Church Warden Janet Wallace on 07852 299030 or by email jduncan896@gmail.com

Romsey Foodbank has requested our continuing support as they try to meet current demands. In the last 3 days they have distributed in excess of 500kg of food and they need to replenish their supplies. They have a good supply of cereals, tea, pasta and rice but other foods and household items are much needed. Please continue to leave your donations at the drop-off point in the Abbey. Thank you.

May we all remain hopeful and joyful during this time and reach out to others with love and prayer.
God bless.

Thomas

A prayer for those affected by the Coronavirus from the Church of England

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

'Lockdown'

Yes there is fear.

Yes there is isolation.

Yes there is panic buying.

Yes there is sickness.

Yes there is even death.

But,

They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise

You can hear the birds again.

They say that after just a few weeks of quiet

The sky is no longer thick with fumes

But blue and grey and clear.

They say that in the streets of Assisi

People are singing to each other

across the empty squares,

keeping their windows open

so that those who are alone

may hear the sounds of family around them.

They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland

Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.

Today a young woman I know

is busy spreading fliers with her number

through the neighbourhood

So that the elders may have someone to call on.

Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples

are preparing to welcome

and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way

All over the world people are waking up to a new reality

To how big we really are.

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul

Yes there is even death.

But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.

Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic

The birds are singing again

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.

Fr. Richard Hendrick, OFM Capuchin Franciscan brother from Ireland.

March 13th 2020