

Letter from Revd Thomas Wharton
Vicar of Romsey Abbey and St. Swithun's
24th March 2020

Dear friends,

The latest announcement from the Prime Minister means that from today Tuesday 24th March 2020 Romsey Abbey and St. Swithun's are now closed to the public until further notice.

This of course is sad but necessary to fight the spread of the Covid-19 virus and protect the NHS.

While we are awaiting the latest guidance from the Church of England about whether we can continue to live stream some of our services from the Abbey, early indications are this might not be possible. Once we have the official guidance I will update you as soon as I know. But we will continue to find new and innovative ways of keeping in touch and sharing our worship with you, whether it is from the Vicar's kitchen or the Deacon's bathroom, there is always a way!

A team of volunteers will this week start phoning parishioners to make contact and see if there is any further support or help needed as we enter this lockdown period. If you need to call us for any support or help then please contact Churchwarden Janet Wallace 07852 299030

We are **closing our Parish Office** from Wednesday 25th March until further notice and the parish administrators and ministry team will be working from home. You can still email the office at parishoffice@romseyabbey.org.uk or any members of our ministry team. The parish office voicemail will be checked daily but won't be manned during regular office hours.

Please also be aware of the **Test Valley Covid-19 Helpline 0330 400 4116** organised by One Community and Daily Hub which is open for all to use and also offers support. We attach separate flyers with further information which I hope you find helpful.

Due to the closure of the Abbey, the Foodbank Collection point has temporarily moved to **The Community Office at Romsey School**. Please do continue to support the Foodbank if you can. It is open Monday - Friday 9am - 3pm and you can drop food off at the door without seeing anyone!

And a message from Rhiannon, the Romsey Abbey Children and Families Worker:

“Obviously life has changed considerably for many of us, and as for my job, well, now I feel like a children's television presenter. There's a weekly schedule on my facebook page (Romsey Abbey Children & Families Worker), with Singing Storytime, Wednesday Songtime, collective worship, Lego Church and art clubs happening via 'lives' - which is video broadcast live onto facebook. My daughters have been proving to be excellent camera operator

and co-host! One of the hardest things lately has been calling families to let them know their children's baptisms have been postponed indefinitely. Although it's been a hard thing to do, it's meant that there's been a chance to get to know families a little better and deepen the relationships we've built already. We're really looking forward to the end of the isolation measures and getting back into seeing everybody in the flesh!"

Amanda Taylor managed to edit and get April's Open Door magazine printed but due to the recent lockdown this won't be distributed until it is safe to do so.

Even though our churches are closed for the time being and we possibly all feel anxious about what the future holds, we still remain a church community even without a church! It is at times such as these we realise how important friendship, compassion, faith and love are in our daily living. As we look to support each other and look out for those who may be more isolated and vulnerable, I hope you, like me can try to make the most of these new circumstances. It can be an opportunity to focus on new things, to appreciate the important and deeper things in life as we try to live each moment in faith and love.

Sally, myself, the wardens and the ministry team continue to pray daily for you all. We will keep in touch through various and innovative means and wish you hope, peace and joy in the weeks and months ahead.

Thomas

Useful Contacts

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