

Dear Friends

As I am sure you are aware by now the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have taken the difficult decision to suspend all acts of public worship. It is to be hoped that this will not be for very long, but for now we must continue our faithful witness to the communities we serve.

This is a sad and very difficult time for all of us, and it is most important to understand that the Church's care for us all has not changed. We are still the Church of England and we serve everyone who lives within our parishes. It is just a case of having to now serve in different ways for the present.

The Archbishops have asked that all clergy continue their usual pattern of daily prayer, and this is what I and Anne will continue to do. I plan to be in all of our 4 churches at least once a week to pray, this will not be "public worship" but just me coming to pray for the local community in your parish church. Our church will remain open for private prayer with printed prayers available to use or take away.

I will be at Shipton on Sunday, Fifield Monday, Idbury Tuesday Milton Friday – all at midday.

With this in mind I would encourage you all to engage in regular prayer in your homes for our communities. As a Church we have a wealth of different ways to offer structured prayer. We have the 1662 prayer book with Morning and Evening Prayer. There are also common worship versions of the same as well as something called "Prayer During the Day". It is hoped that copies of Prayer During the Day will be in each church (as are the 1662 prayer book) and you are invited to take a copy for home use. There are links to these prayers below.

We need to keep in touch, we are after all a family, to this end the Church News will be sent out once a week to keep you informed. Let us also do our best to keep in touch with each other, by email, telephone or any other method that suits. We may find that we need to speak to someone in more depth and Anne and I are always there if need be. We also have in our benefice the Pastoral Care Team under the guidance of Elaine Russel Jarvie who is a trained Councillor and is happy for you to contact her.

The Archbishops in their letter to the clergy said: *"Being a part of the Church of England is going to look very different in the days ahead. Our life is going to be less characterised by attendance at church on Sunday, and more characterised by the prayer and service we offer each day. We may not be able to pray with people in the ways that we were used to, but we can certainly pray for people. And we can offer practical care and support... This is a defining moment for the Church of England. Are we truly a church for all, or just a church for ourselves? We urge you to become a different sort of church in these coming months: hopeful and rooted in the offering of prayer and praise and overflowing in service to the world.*

*Please, therefore, join us in this great challenge and pray for our Government and nation, for each other, and especially for those who work in our health and emergency services."*

I remain

Yours faithfully

Geoffrey

For Personal prayers

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer-resources>

For daily prayer and readings:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>