

St Luke's Church Wellington Road Parkstone BH14 9LF

Dear friends and Neighbours,



Maggie and I and the whole church family of St Luke's do very much hope that you and your families are managing at this very difficult, uncertain and challenging time for ourselves and the whole world. We do feel for each one living in this community in Parkstone, and especially the anxious, frail, elderly and sick. Please know we are holding you in our thoughts and prayers.

It is good to be hearing wonderful stories of people coming together in a new way, of care for the isolated and for acts of kindness and love to neighbours. We are particularly grateful to the amazing commitment of health professionals, carers, retail staff, food producers, leaders in education, the borough staff and many others.

As a church we are encouraging all to be in contact with and care for one another and those living around us.

It is not now possible to gather together for worship, for group meetings and socially. However, God, faith and church are very much alive and we are finding new ways of being and living. The building is presently open for all each day from 9am to 4pm for quiet prayer and reflection and resources are available. We are using the phone much more and the internet well – Do go stlukeparkstone.org.uk for information, and you can listen to recorded talks from the past and anything we may upload. The Church of England website has much guidance and prayer resources you might find helpful.

In the uncertainty and anxiety we are all being challenged to adopt a new perspective as we reassess what we value and seek in life. And as recommended by *Livewell* Dorset may we “be active, connect, take notice, keep learning and give.”

And finally, may we live by faith and not by fear. We can do that by focusing afresh on God, goodness, truth and beauty. As Nicky Gumbel of Holy Trinity Brompton * said last Sunday, “Feed faith not fear!” Look to God, who is above and over all things. He is with us in our worries and darkness and, come what may, He loves us and nothing can separate you and me from his presence and good purposes. He is faithful. Do look at some of the encouraging verses on the back of this letter. Thank you for all you are and do.

With every blessing, your friend and vicar, *Chris Strain*

*Go to the HTB web site for more great resources and the Alpha Course online

Some Encouraging Verses from the Bible

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. Psalm 46:1

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' Psalm 91:1-2

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27

Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:39

Some Prayers about the outbreak

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love, for your name's sake. **Amen.**

God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light; through him who suffered alone on the cross, but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gracious God, give skill, love, protection and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your Spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer in a contemporary version

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. **Amen.**

From Revd Canon Chris Strain

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