

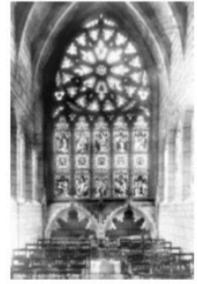
Benefice of Minchinhampton with Box and Amberley

The Revd Canon Howard Gilbert

The Rectory
Butt Street
Minchinhampton
GL6 9JP

Telephone: 01453 882289

rector@minchchurch.org.uk
www.minchchurch.org.uk



24 March 2020

Dear Friends,

It has felt like a continual battering of fundamental changes to our way of life over the last couple of weeks. I was shocked, as you will have been, by our Prime Minister's recent statement confining us to barracks! So, until further notice the **church building (including our new little lending library), and the office are all locked up** (we're still taking emails and calls).

Whilst I am no longer able to pray in church, I shall continue **praying at 9am and 5pm** from home, with and for you. Please do let me know if you have **prayer requests**. And if you'd like a chat – **do call!** I am also still allowed out for essential care activities, and I shall try to stay in touch regularly. **Christine is still picking up her emails from home, and I shall try to keep on top of calls coming into the office.**

During these present troubles I am sure most of us are feeling quite helpless. I think we need to be reminded to let the experts worry about the big picture, whilst we endeavour to make the most of the time we have been given. I am reminded of the words:

O Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;

the courage to change the things I can;

and the wisdom to know the difference.

Similarly, I heard the reflections of a Chinese woman whose life is now getting back to relative normal. She regrets not spending her time in lock-down more wisely, as she hasn't read all the books she had wanted to!

So, I think this is something of an enforced Lenten Retreat for us all. We are called to spend time reading and praying in Lent, and never has God given us more time to do so!

Specifically, might I suggest we all make time each day to enrich our spiritual health, our mental health, our emotional health and our physical health. Here are just a few suggestions:

- We should **pray** (maybe all at the same time at 9am). I know lots of people have been using the morning prayer I have circulated. Others will, I'm sure, rather just pray simply.
- It is very good for us to **enrich our mind, and** especially in ways we've not been stretched before...
 - Do read
 - Maybe even learn a language (I can heartily recommend the website/app Duolingo!)
- We must look after our **emotional health**
 - Call someone else from church
 - Maybe "Zoom" video-link with someone in the family
- **Physical Health**
 - Do go for a walk in God's Creation (but only once a day!).
 - Get some sunlight (even if only in the back garden)
 - Do something physical. Even if staying in the house you could do some (improvised) weights using baked bean cans, or wine bottles if you're feeling strong!

The Pope has asked us to respond in one specific way. "At a time when humanity trembles because of the COVID-19 pandemic", Pope Francis is asking Christians of every denomination to join together at 11am, our time, on Wednesday March 25 to recite the Lord's Prayer.

We are all invited to invoke the Almighty God, to recite at the same time the prayer that Jesus, our Lord, taught us.

"To the pandemic of the virus we want to respond with the universality of prayer, compassion and tenderness," he said. "Let's stay united. Let us make those who are alone and tested feel our closeness," as well as doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers and volunteers.

We will soon have more prayer resources coming, but until then...

Faith doesn't always mean that God changes your situation,

sometimes it means God uses a situation to change you.

And, please do access practical help if you need it. Do contact us at the office, and we will allocate you one of our volunteers to come to your aid!

Yours in Christ, and wishing you every blessing at this very difficult time,

Howard

Rector.