

Dear Friends

This weekend marks the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Victory in Europe. Plans for a big community, national and international commemorations have had to be abandoned but we are still encouraged to decorate our homes and join in virtually if we are able to. There are also a number of socially distanced street parties being organised both locally and nationally. The Church of England has produced resources for churches to use to mark the day and has also given us a special prayer that you may like to use.

***Lord God our Father,  
we pledge ourselves to serve you and all humankind, in the cause of peace,  
for the relief of want and suffering,  
and for the praise of your name.  
Guide us by your Spirit;  
give us wisdom;  
give us courage;  
give us hope;  
and keep us faithful now and always.  
Amen.***

Some of you may be able to remember the VE Day celebrations or have heard about them from family and friends. One thing that is often said about the dark days of wartime is that there was a great sense of community.

Although our current circumstances are nothing like wartime, we are undoubtedly facing a very challenging time and there does seem to be a greater desire for people to work together and serve the community. Within days of the lockdown being introduced, groups were being formed to ensure that the most vulnerable in our communities were supported. As communities we are united against an invisible enemy.

I was contacted this week by Dominic Harris who has set up a new Facebook group called S17 live. The group is for people to chat, share news and keep up to date with what is happening locally. If you would like to be part of this this is the link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/547066032622770/>

You may also be aware of Alfiebear. If you haven't heard of him, Alfiebear has become something of a local celebrity. Alfie is a very large teddy bear who stands in the front garden of a house at the bottom of Green Oak Avenue. His owners decided to dress him up in a different costume every day as a way of putting a smile on the faces of the local community. So popular has Alfiebear become that many families now walk past him daily as part of their exercise. The family have also raised over £1200 for NHS charities through their just giving page and Alfiebear has even appeared on Look North!



Please also continue to support our local foodbanks as they are working hard in extremely difficult circumstances as there are even greater demands for their help. Food can be dropped off at The Michael Church on Low Edges Road between 10.30 and 11.30 on Monday mornings (though not on Bank Holidays). We have been advised that foodbank work is "key work" so if anyone challenges you about being out when you are bringing food, please tell them that you are bringing donated food to a foodbank (if you need to contact the foodbank, please ring 07964 896283). If you would prefer to donate money to the foodbank at this time you can do this either by phoning the

foodbank to set up a payment or standing order or through Pay Pal (Grace Foodbank Sheffield) or by sending a cheque to The Grace Food Bank, 240, Lowedges Road Sheffield South Yorkshire S8 7JB

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. What started in 2016 as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Church of England has grown into an international and ecumenical call to prayer. There are a host of useful resources linked to Thy Kingdom Come 2020 which you can find here.

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/about-us#taking-part>.

You may also have seen or heard about this beautiful video called the UK Blessing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtlI3mNj5U>. This brings together worship leaders from over 65 different churches and networks in the UK. Organised and put together by worship leader Tim Hughes. We hope that this song will be a blessing to you and your household.



Christian Aid Week will be from May 10<sup>th</sup> to May 16<sup>th</sup>. Under the current circumstance, sadly, house to house and other face to face events cannot go ahead this Christian Aid Week. However, we there is a vibrant, virtual Christian Aid Week to get involved in online at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/christian-aid-week/virtual-fundraisers>

Donations can be made online or to make a donation by telephone please phone **020 7523 2269** or to pay directly into the Christian Aid bank account

please phone **0207523 2226**

We are really missing meeting each week in our small group to catch up on each other's news and discuss the weekly sermon. But there's plenty food for thought each week from the team, Ali, Neil, Claire, Chris and Phil, as they speak to us from their own homes. This week we enjoyed seeing Chris's garden through the window, and thought how bare the trees and shrubs were just a few weeks ago, and now everything is transformed into that amazing citrus green of Spring. Chris spoke about the disciples and their friends, locked away, fear-filled and grieving (sound familiar?) being transformed into preachers, missionaries, gospel writers by the Holy Spirit.

That led me on to thinking, how have I (Angela) been transformed by the Spirit? It would be great to be able to see a reverse version of 'It's a Wonderful Life' and see how my life would have been if I hadn't been 'reborn' all those years ago. One thing that has definitely changed is that back in my younger days I was so paralysed with shyness I was terrified of meeting and speaking to people I didn't know very well. And that led me on to thinking about the last time, before the lockdown, when I stood up in church and spoke. It was to announce that Liz and I would be retiring as church wardens at the Annual Meeting. That meeting should have taken place a week last Sunday on 26<sup>th</sup> April, and the new wardens would officially take over at the end of May after being sworn in at the Cathedral.

Well, the bishop has decreed that all wardens currently in post should remain there until the churches are open again and Annual Meetings can take place. At the same time as we announced our retirement Angela asked the whole church to pray for our replacements, and that may have fallen off your agendas with so many other things which have taken priority; but we urge you to re-instate it; Liz and I don't choose the next wardens – God does, and that decision can only come to light by prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

So, if a name keeps coming to mind as you pray, tell that person; if you keep having little 'nudges' that it's a job you could do, don't ignore them. When we return to worshipping together again, 'church' won't be the same – we will be entering a time of the 'new normal'. We think it's going to be challenging and exciting and we need the right people to take us on that journey. So, let's get praying, lockdown won't last forever, and we need to be ready for whatever God has in store for All Saints when it's over.

Finally, we can do no better than include the closing comments from a letter sent to us by the Bishop Pete

*If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. When I thought, 'My foot is slipping', your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up. When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. Psalm 94.17-19*

We are of course a long way from anything like 'normal' and even when large scale gatherings in theatres, football grounds, pubs and churches are possible once again, I suspect the 'new normal' will not be exactly like the normality we knew before. Please don't underestimate the strangeness which still lies ahead of us — I suspect a sense of unfamiliarity will continue for quite some time yet. But the LORD is our help, and when we think our feet are slipping, we can be sure his steadfast love will hold us up; and when the cares of our heart are many, his consolations cheer the soul.

Take care and stay safe

With Love, Angela and Liz