

## **A message from Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy for clergy and community**

**24 March 2020**

Hello everyone, the prayer for this week: Almighty God in Christ you make all things new, transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace. And, in the renewal of our lives, make known your heavenly glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What an incredible week, or weeks it's been for us all. On Sunday, for the very first time in living memory, our churches were closed for Sunday services. Later that day, it was made clear that the requirement for all places of worship is for our doors to be closed. I know that many of you had wanted to be able to keep the doors of your churches open through the week so that people could come in for personal and private prayer. That is no longer possible.

All our buildings now need to be closed. That means that the creativity and imagination which has already begun and is underway – those opportunities for reaching out, for worship, pastoral care, communicating with members of our parishes and other communities – needs to be going on for quite a bit longer.

Last Sunday, people had a go at live streaming. I've seen some really terrific things and it was lovely to be part of a number of different communities in this way. I know that many of you are hoping and working this week towards getting better with that technology, I certainly need to do so! I joined a group in order to watch one particular prayer service and participate in it, only to discover that I'd invited a lot of people to join with me; they'd all seen it and I, somehow or another, got it wrong! So, I certainly need to get better at that, and plan to, by this coming Sunday.

I have heard such terrific stories from lay leaders and clergy who I know are carrying a particular burden of care and responsibility; who feel aching that in some way or another because we are not able to reach out and touch (our natural inclination when we care for people); and when we are not able to act as the church in ways that we always have done; that people are feeling somewhat at a loss. It is great to know how many of you are connecting with each other, sharing ideas, sharing resources, sharing information.

I hope that over the coming weeks, as I continue to update you through this video and in other ways, you also will continue to update your parish communities. Last week I know that members of parishes particularly were contacted by letter or an email. I heard a great story of one place where, for those who are not in email contact, letters were delivered to houses and those who received them met the bearers with joy and gladness, with grief, but also with a great sense of hope.

Please know that you and the whole Diocese, the body of Christ in this place, continue to be in my prayers, in the prayers of the Bishops every single day. Going forward, the Bishops, Diocesan Secretary and other senior staff are meeting to work through what we know are many and various issues of concern and to begin to lay out plans.

We will update you regularly. We will let you know what it is that we think we're able to do, that we plan to do, in the weeks and possibly the months ahead.

This morning I've heard the news that the Lambeth Conference has been postponed to 2021. That means that there is one way in which we Bishops can be absolutely clear that we will be here, right here in the Diocese with you, alongside you and for you in the love of Christ over this time.

This morning, the reading for morning prayer came from Luke's Gospel in Chapter 18, and it begins in this way:

'Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. And it's that parable of the widow who goes to the unjust judge and keeps on and on and on until he gives her what it is that she seeks. Please pray, keep on praying. Don't lose heart.'

Lord Jesus Christ, healer and friend. Come and care for us all through the danger and uncertainty of the coronavirus epidemic. To people who are sick, bring healing. To people who are displaced, isolated or cut off from family, friends or work, bring comfort and companionship. Work with medical staff as they care for the sick and protect them from harm. Give skill and fruitful research to scientists as they search for treatments, prevention and a cure. To public health authorities give wisdom to decide the best ways to manage both this crisis and our anxieties. When communities are fearful give a calm spirit and kindness to neighbours and strangers. Through this testing time and through all the risks we face together teach us once again how we can love one another as you have loved us. Amen.

The Lord be with you.