



St Mary's
Charlton Kings

Dear members of St Mary's Parish Church,

Ref: Covid-19 and its impact on parish life and Church Community

We have been instructed by the diocese of Gloucester that we **must close St Mary's for all church services, and communions with immediate effect.**

However, we are not going to simple sit and wait for this all to be over.

- I am going to pray every day for the congregation of St Mary's and the wider Charlton Kings community.
- We are going to record a weekly Communion service and post it on the St Mary's web site. The service will be available for viewing at 10am on every Sunday, while this crisis persists.
- We are going to telephone and contact as many people as we can every week to make sure everyone is OK so, if anyone is in need, we can respond and get them help.
- We will ask you to keep your ear to the ground and refer to us anyone you hear about who may be in need of assistance.
- We will work with other agencies and initiatives and churches to help and to assist in whatever form is necessary, appropriate and feasible.



One of my absolute favourite readings from the New Testament is that of Romans 12.9-13, 21-end. I remember the first time I ever heard those words from vs. 21 in

particular, at the time I found them extremely powerful and thought provoking. The whole chapter of Romans 12 is an exhortation for the Christian Community in Rome. The words,

'do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'

For me has a strong attraction. The words of the chapter are not reliant upon one source of teaching but bring together elements of Jesus' teaching, wisdom literature, and even philosophy.

These very few words in my mind offer a potent and commanding narrative for us to adopt. Why do I think it is so powerful? Well it is powerful because it refers to love. Paul although giving wide-ranging admonishments to the church actually in the end only regarded one as the pre-eminent and necessary command – that Love is the only certain requirement of the Christian. Not only in times of good fortune, but also and more importantly when things are difficult, bleak or frightening.

Yesterday, as I sat with the Church Wardens and the co-ordinator of our Visitors Team to discuss our response to the situation which we all, both the community and the entire country now faces, these words from Romans rang around in my head endlessly reminding me of my duty, as your parish priest and of all our duties to defend the weak, protect the vulnerable and honour all people.

I realise that this is a difficult and tricky time. Scary and frightening for some, but I ask all of you to remain in constant vigilance and love for each other. Hold each other in your prayers and do not be overcome by evil.

Prayers, blessings and love

Graham

Vicar
St Mary's Parish Church
Charlton Kings