

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FARNHAM

Mid April / May 2020 E-News

The current Corona virus pandemic is resulting in the cancellation of most if not all services and other events and activities. Our normal monthly newsletter is therefore replaced by this special edition with advice and information on what is taking place in our Churches and the community.

A MESSAGE FROM CHURCHES TOGETHER IN FARNHAM

Dear Everyone

Unusual times

Many of us still feel stunned at the speed of events, which have taken over our lives. We really are all in this together: we are equally in enforced lockdown, vulnerable and needy and unable to guess what the future holds. We are equally dependent on Doctors, Nurses, Cleaners, the Police, Politicians, and those who provide our food: and of course dependent on our brother and sister Christians. We lament the necessary closure of our Churches and the necessary cancellation of our Good Friday Walk of Witness. Our lives have changed. We pray for the sick and dying, the bereaved, the orphaned, the lonely, those suffering financial hardship - as well as the doctors and Nurses and others providing support.

But we do have blessings: although isolated we can still talk (and Skype and WhatsApp) our family and friends. Doctors and Nurses are working fearlessly and heroically, we have support from neighbours through Helplines, we have Farnham Assist and Farnham Foodbank and we have many, many blessings from the Lord - who is suffering with us.

The steering committee would greatly appreciate information on ways member Churches are supporting those in need – so we can share this with all the Churches. Thank you.

At this time of Easter may we pray for an early release from the Corona virus scourge and the suffering it is causing. Let us pray for patience, and for a speedy return to a more settled life.

Michael McDonnell
Chair of Churches Together in Farnham

BRITISH & IRISH CHURCH LEADERS write to Christians in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

At the start of Holy Week, as Christians follow in the footsteps of Jesus as the events that lead to Good Friday unfold, followed by the hope of Easter Day, leaders of churches throughout the British Isles issued the following statement and call to continued prayer as we face the Covid-19 pandemic.

“God’s world is in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. In the nations that make up Britain and Ireland the Covid-19 virus continues to affect people at an alarming rate, health services along with many of our institutions and organisations, both local and national, are under extreme pressure and people are getting used to living in a very different way, many in extreme isolation. As with all such crises, there is a danger that the most vulnerable in society will be most badly affected.

“Christians the world over are entering an important time in the church year as we look to the events of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection. At the centre of our common faith are both the depths of despair and the heights of joy. In the Bible and in the songs and liturgies of the Church, we see Jesus entering fully into human suffering. In His rising again, that suffering is redeemed and transformed into hope and joy. After Jesus’ death his disciples were afraid and all seemed lost and hopeless, but the risen Christ met them in their despair and restored hope through his victory over death. We pray that the world today might know this hope in place of despair.

“In the Book of Daniel, we read about God’s people being taken into exile in Babylon. Daniel could not pray in the Temple in Jerusalem, but he continued to pray in exile – opening his window to face Jerusalem. Though he was on his own he joined with the prayers of the people wherever they were. Now we too are separated from each other physically, but when we pray in our homes we join in with this ancient tradition of our home as a place of prayer. Wherever we are, whenever we pray, when we speak and think of Christ, there he is in the midst of us. We join our prayers with all those who pray in our own churches and communities and around the world.

“As church leaders from across the many and varied churches of these Islands we urge all people to join us in prayer this Holy Week and Easter; to pray for those who suffer, those who face untimely death and all those who care for them; to celebrate our common faith at a difficult time; to help and support our neighbours in need; and to observe all the safeguards in place to slow the spread of disease.”

Our Prayer:

“Loving God, in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for our salvation, cast out the darkness of our anxiety, fear and mourning, enfold us in your love and give us joy and hope this Easter. Amen.”

The letter was signed by 22 leaders of churches throughout the British Isles

CORONAVIRUS HELPLINE OPEN IN FARNHAM – If you need help during the COVID-19 emergency and have no access to family, friends and neighbours, call the **FARNHAM AND VILLAGES HELPLINE** at the Farnham Co-ordination Centre on **01252-745446** (9:00 a.m to 8:00 p.m) or e-mail help@farnhammaltings.com. There is a recorded message on the phone line outside hours.

The helpline was announced by Farnham Town Council on 26th March and has been established in conjunction with **Farnham Herald** and **The Maltings**. More information is on the Churches Together website, where you can view or download the Farnham Helpline Leaflet.

MESSAGE TO VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS from the Manager of Farnham ASSIST – On 7th April, June Trantom wrote to volunteers and supporters to thank them for their continuing support for the older folk of Farnham. Farnham ASSIST is now working as part of the **Farnham and Villages Coronavirus Community Hub** (Helpline available on **01252-745446**).

June reminded supporters that they can donate financially through the Farnham Assist website or by cheque or bank transfer (please see the Churches Together website for a link with bank details).

LOCAL CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES – During the emergency, many local charitable activities continue and will prove even more important to the community. **They still need your help**, through financial donation and in other ways such as volunteering. Notable local organisations which would love to receive offers of help include:

- **Your local church**, (for example collecting items for those who cannot get out, or telephoning those alone) - call the church office
- **Farnham Foodbank**
- **Farnham ASSIST**
- **Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice**

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 2020 – Donation appeal from the Chair of Farnham & District CA – Karen Fewster writes: “It will come as no surprise to you to know that Christian Aid Week will be different this year. There will be events and worship but these will all be ‘virtual’. There will be no street collections or door to door envelopes. The likely effect of this is that, from Farnham alone, the donations will be down some £15,000.

“I know the focus at the moment is on COVID-19 locally — but Christian Aid is dealing with the same virus in refugee camps in Africa and Asia, where soap is a luxury and clean water non-existent. East Africa has just seen the worst plague of locusts for many years! So we need a steady stream of donations to fund Christian Aid’s work.”

You can donate on-line or by telephone (links on the Churches Together website). Christian Aid Farnham hopes to hold a few events later in the year, once we are clear of the current social distancing requirement.

DIARY – Our regular monthly E-News includes a **Diary Section** giving notice of some special events in the following weeks. The CTF website provides more details of many of these activities.

During the current COVID-19 virus pandemic, the vast majority of church and other local activities are not taking place, but the Diary Section will return as the emergency eases and we are again able to start enjoying these events.

The CTF website is at:

<https://www.churchestogether.org/farnham>

where you will also find links to our member churches and associates’ individual websites, with details of services and other activities.