

Our Ref: +PBW/+RT/ajh

17 March 2020

Dear Friends

Today's announcement of the suspension of public worship in our churches is an unprecedented one and will be very painful for so many of you, as it is for us. However, it is the right response to the threat posed by the virus and the great anxiety of so many people.

This is a time for us as the Church to focus on our calling as the body to Christ to seek in prayerful and practical ways what it truly means to love our neighbour. We have already heard wonderful stories of how you and others in your community are responding to the situation. We thank you for all that you are and all that you do.

We encourage you to continue to ensure that the rhythm of prayer which undergirds the Church's life continues throughout this time of global crisis. We would also ask you to do your best to keep the church open as a place of private prayer and for personal reflection. You will read from the Archbishops' letter that they ask us to hold this Sunday – Mothering Sunday – as a day of prayer and action. Though we cannot meet, we are asked at 7pm to light a candle in our windows and pray. We will both be doing that and you might like to encourage people to do the same.

The Government's advice is that we should not engage in any non-essential travel, meetings and work from home where possible, and have special care for the vulnerable groups. These are our guiding principles. There will still be many questions perhaps about funerals or weddings, or church buildings and finance. The Church of England is consulting with its legal team to be able to answer specific questions and support and guidance will be available as soon as possible. Links to this will be on our website as soon as possible [www.bathwells.anglican.org/coronavirus](http://www.bathwells.anglican.org/coronavirus).

However, we have met today with deanery leaders - Lay Deans and Area Deans - and they should be your first port of call to ensure we are offering a consistent approach. Please also look to the website if you can, as you may find the answer you seek there. If you cannot, do contact your Archdeacon or the Communications Team (email).

At this time, we look to God, whose love is more than we can ever ask for or imagine. May you be sustained and renewed by Him daily throughout this difficult time.

With our prayers, thanks and blessing



**The Rt Reverend Peter Hancock, Bishop of Bath & Wells**

**The Rt Reverend Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton**

The Bishops' Office | The Palace | Wells | Somerset | BA5 2PD | 01749 672341  
bishop@bathwells.anglican.org | bishop.taunton@bathwells.anglican.org

[www.bathandwells.org.uk](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk)