



*Benefice of  
St Mary the Virgin, Higham Ferrers  
with  
St John the Baptist, Chelveston-cum-Caldecott*



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10<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### **Third Letter to the Church Family**

Dear Friends,

We are now in a Holy Week like none we have experienced before, with our church buildings closed, our usual Holy Week services unable to take place and anticipating a strange Easter Day with none of the usual celebrations together in packed churches, among family and friends and with Easter Egg Hunts, glasses of prosecco, beautiful flowers everywhere, and the glorious white and gold colours in hangings and vestments replacing the heaviness of purple and the red of Good Friday. There is a danger it will feel like we are still in Lent, still struggling with the hardness of it all, and not released into the joy of Easter.

It may be that this joy is simply postponed, to be experienced in and around Pentecost instead – but it may be that there will be joy, even in isolation and lock down – for the Holy Spirit is not within our control and is not confined to our buildings or to our usual liturgies, but goes where it wills! It may be that this Holy Week, is in fact, more like Holy Week than ever before, and the hope and new life of Easter something that we will need and appreciate in a new way. We might find that we can be glad for and celebrate with our brothers and sisters in China, and Italy and Spain – released from lockdown perhaps in time for the festivities. We are certainly coming to see ourselves as a worldwide family in new ways through this crisis – sharing in suffering and in each other's good news too.

In all this, our worship has continued online and at home and we are keeping in touch with one another through social media, including What's App Groups, Facebook as well as emails, phone calls and our Benefice Website. If you have not yet been able to access any of this, or you know someone who can't, please do let us know. In Holy Week our daily podcasts have been inspired by the hymn, 'My Song is Love Unknown' and the Great Three Days of Easter will see services for Maundy Thursday (7pm), Good Friday (2pm) and Holy Saturday (8pm), as well as a special Easter Festival Service on Easter Day (10am). You are invited to join together if you can at the suggested times, but in each case, the services will be available online earlier and later in the day so that you can access them at any time that suits you too. The services can be found here:

<http://church.chelveston.org.uk/holy-week> or on the benefice web site.

Also on Easter Day there will be a Eucharist broadcast from the Cathedral which goes live at 10.30am, and a special Easter Day Service recorded by the Archbishop of Canterbury which all are invited to join in with at 9am.

Bishop Donald continues to produce a weekly video message for us all which you can access from the Benefice website at: [www.stmarystjohnunited.co.uk](http://www.stmarystjohnunited.co.uk) and both church Facebook pages. Many other resources, prayer and information are available via the Church of England website at [www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online](http://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online)

Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer is being said daily by the clergy and ministers and we will aim to do so even from our different locations at 9am and 5pm – if you follow the link here: [www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer](http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer) you can join in with those same services from home each day.

Above all, do keep in touch with us and let us know if you, or others you know, need help in any way. It is possible to print this letter etc off and put through letterboxes of those who are not online, but you must of course wear gloves to do so safely. Do please continue to let us know any special prayer requests – I know many of us have family who are living in areas worse affected and on the front line as NHS staff or other key workers.

### **A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus**

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort knowing that nothing  
can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

Brenda, Rev Linda, Rev Lesley and Fr Paul join me in wishing you all a Happy and Blessed Easter – may you know the joy of this season even in these strange times and may the risen Christ fill you with hope and strength.

*Michelle*

**The Revd Michelle Dalliston**

*Interim Vicar*

Tel: 01733 569147/07961 003352

[michelleacd@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:michelleacd@hotmail.co.uk)