



## The Diocese of Southwark

24 March 2020

## The Bishop of Southwark

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### To the Clergy of the Diocese of Southwark

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am sure many of you will already know that the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have today released instructions which further restrict us all in this unprecedented national emergency. In essence, we are to remain in our homes and extend a ministry of love remotely for the coming days and weeks. This goes very much against the grain and will I know be utterly bewildering. We do, of course, have the opportunity to join with the groups of volunteers to go to the aid of those in need.

The opening paragraph of the Archbishops letter gives us the background to these restrictions and I believe it is right for us to set an example and model what the Government is requesting in a desperate bid to flatten out the trajectory of coronavirus infection and to protect our NHS, if at all possible, from being overwhelmed. We know that this will seem especially hard for those of you who live next door to, or on the same site, as your church; but the Archbishops believe that it is right that we all share the challenges of these extraordinary times as equally as possible and conduct even private worship strictly in the confines of our own homes.

We live, move and have our being as part of praying communities and these are not in any way restricted to buildings but to our being part of the Body of Christ. We are being called now to find new ways of deepening our practice of prayer and faith helping those in our communities to do likewise. Our hope is in the Lord and when faced with hard challenges and painful realities, as we are now, it is vital that we put our trust in the living God who has revealed himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Coronavirus Task Group continues to meet regularly and is closely monitoring and seeking to respond to the questions that people are sending to us. We are also mindful of the material that is flowing down from the national church. We know that there will be many practical questions as we move into Holy Week and Easter and we will try to address these in future communications.

As well as my invitation to you all to join with me in saying the Lord's Prayer daily at 1pm and 7pm, the Archbishops are encouraging us to pray with Pope Francis tomorrow at 11am and to continue to stream services from your home so that parishioners are able to join in worship.

The coming days will be a real test but let us be of good courage. With my prayers and love in Christ and for you, your families and parishioners.

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun  
The Bishop of Southwark

On behalf of the CTG (The CTG is Bishop Christopher, Ruth Martin, the Venerable Alastair Cutting, the Very Revd Andrew Nunn and the Revd Canon Wendy Robins)