

Becoming a different kind of church

This page would normally have included the list of all the services taking place in April in the 12 Golden Cap parishes. But just as we were about to go to press, we heard the news that the Church of England had decided to suspend all church services in response to the coronavirus crisis.

This followed the Government's announcements that in order to try to control the spread of the virus they were imposing restrictions on public gatherings, transport and working.

But the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Justin Welby and John Sentamu, said that far from having to "shut up shop", the Church of England must face the challenge by becoming a radically different kind of church rooted in prayer and serving others.

The Archbishops hope that church buildings will, where practical, remain open as places of prayer for the community, while observing the recommendations on social distancing, and this is being actively pursued by churches in the Golden Cap Team.

With public worship unlikely to return to normal for some time the Church of England is expanding what it can offer online. This will include an audio of a simple daytime prayer and night prayer service, more video content and some live-streaming, new mental health reflections to support people, and webinars to help churches stream sermons, events and make the most of social media.

They are aiming to make as much of this as possible available in simple downloadable and printable formats for those who are not particularly familiar with the technology.

There are a range of Christian resources already available:

- **#LiveLent: Care for God's Creation** - the Church of England's Lent campaign for 2020 which we covered in some detail in last month's issue.
- **The BBC's Daily Service and Sunday Worship** - radio programmes which are currently making use of some of the themes from #LiveLent as part of their broadcasts.
- **Prayer for the day** - each day the Church of England publishes this in audio and text.
- **Smart speakers** – daily prayer and #LiveLent audio content can be accessed via smart speaker apps.
- **Live streaming services** - users can watch live streams of services from a range of churches.

More details on these can be found on the Church of England website at www.churchofengland.org and information can also be obtained on the Diocesan website at www.salisburyanglican.org

Locally the Golden Cap Team has its own website at www.goldencapteamofchurches.org and also has a Facebook page.

In response to the coronavirus crisis, the Church of England will be significantly expanding its digital output in the near future and this is planned to include:

- **Simple daytime prayer and night prayer service** – building on the existing daily prayer feed, it will record audio to accompany daytime prayer and night prayer per day, which will be available via an updated app and accompanying podcasts.
- **More video content** – this will include video services and more content for Holy Week and Easter. In addition, it will make Holy Week audio content available.

- **Using AChurchNearYou.com** – it will provide information on those churches that are live streaming services and events.
- **Mental health reflections** – daily reflections to help people, especially at a time when they may well be feeling lonely, isolated or anxious.
- **Increasing the number of webinars** - to help churches stream sermons, events and make the most of social media.

Churches are urging local congregations to be in the forefront of providing practical care and support for the most poor and the most vulnerable during this crisis.

The Archbishops said: “Being a part of the Church of England is going to look very different in the days ahead. Our life is going to be less characterised by attendance at church on Sunday, and more characterised by the prayer and service we offer each day.

“We may not be able to pray with people in the ways that we are used to, but we can certainly pray for people. And we can certainly offer practical care and support.”

They added: “This is a defining moment for the Church of England. Are we truly are a church for all, or just the church for ourselves. We urge you sisters and brothers to become a different sort of church in these coming months: hopeful and rooted in the offering of prayer and praise and overflowing in service to the world.”