

Coronavirus – be wise, but not fearful!

Dear Friends across the Parish,

This is a brief note to let you know that the Parish of Great Chesham are seeking to follow the diocesan guidelines for the developing Coronavirus situation. Of course, the situation is changing all the time, and so Clergy and Wardens will be keeping abreast of communications coming from the Diocese, National Church and Public Health England, and will act accordingly.

The current situation is that all services and meetings will continue to be held as usual. This week a letter from the archbishops has instructed that we should refrain from physical contact while sharing the peace (at Ashley Green they have enjoyed learning the sign language version!), and that we should not drink from the common cup and receive only the bread, which is quite acceptable, as at communion we “feed on Christ in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving”.

We want our churches to continue to be places of welcome and mutual love – and therefore it will require EVERYONE to play their part – practical love will include following the government advice to wash hands regularly with hot water and soap (and using alcohol based hand gels). In our church buildings we will be seeking to keep surfaces and door handles clean. We won't be serving refreshments for the time being as instructed by the diocese, and it would be wise not to shake hands or hug, but to greet others with good eye contact and a warm smile!

If you think you might have coronavirus symptoms and decide to self-isolate, as well as following the government guidelines, can I encourage you to contact your vicar or one of the church wardens (or let a friend know who can do that for you). We realise that this isolation could be very hard for some, and we would want to offer as much support as possible during this time.

Let's continue in prayer for those in authority making decisions, and for one another during this time of uncertainty. In the Bible you can find those reassuring words “*Do not be afraid*” some 366 times – one for each day of the year (including a leap year!). We are right to take the Coronavirus situation seriously, but we are not to be fearful – for wonderfully we trust a Sovereign God who rules and reigns over all, and a loving Father who knows our greatest needs.

With love in Christ,
John Shepherd