

To the Parishioners and Congregation of Brindle St James' Church
Please circulate to any of your friends or family.

Dear Friends

'For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them'. Matthew 18:20

Introduction

This note comes to you from Brindle St James' Church on behalf of our Rector, Reverend David Ward and the Parochial Church Council. We pray that it finds you, and your nearest and dearest, well in body, mind and spirit. Coronavirus 'Covid-19' is having a huge impact on us all and everyone is responding to it differently. It is a time of mixed blessings; for some it is a time to rest, to take stock, to be with their partners and children and enjoy being together; for others it is a time of anxiety, loneliness, questioning and loss. There are only individual and personal responses to the necessary precautions and therefore restrictions placed on us by the need to slow down the spread of the virus. What remains constant however, is the love of God and his care of all his children. As we enter this time, of Passiontide and journey with Jesus Christ towards the Cross and celebrate his resurrection on Easter Sunday, we can gain courage and comfort from knowing his love and salvation of us all.

The Covid-19 physical distancing guidelines have meant the church building is currently closed and so we, along with many others across the Church of England, have been exploring different ways of communicating and worshipping. This note is another way of us staying in touch and providing information about the opportunities we have on offer for us to continue to be Church and to be connected as God's children through his words and worship of him. This note includes details on:

- Prayers – opportunities to pray collectively, but physically separate.
- Worship – different ways to worship and participate in the Eucharist in your own home during Easter.
- Sunday School – resources to keep our children connected.
- Pastoral Team – how we can continue to provide support where needed.
- Brindle Voice – keep sending in your articles.
- Generous Giving – a request to consider making your gifts through standing order rather than cash to support the ongoing running costs of St James' Church.
- Keeping in contact – how to keep in contact and who to contact.
- Home a place of prayer and worship – we are able to seek guidance in these times from the experience of others and how we will have grown in the Grace of God.
- Easter Message.

Prayers

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7.

There is such power in prayer, for the benefit of creation, humankind and individuals and comfort in presenting our concerns, requests and joys to the Lord and having a simple channel through which we can hear and experience his response. During Lent David was leading Evening Prayer each Wednesday evening. Although the Church building is closed David, Sam and James have continued to lead these prayers each week from their own homes. This will continue with 'Sam at Seven' a virtual Evening Prayer service that will be conducted every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. It provides an opportunity for us to connect with God and each other by taking just a short time to stop what we are doing, no matter where we are, or who we are with and pray.

Sam will alternate between the Common Worship (CW) Evening Prayer format and that contained in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). You can download the Church of England Common Worship Daily Prayer App which will give you morning, evening and night (compline) prayers. This can be found in the App Store or via www.churchofengland.org.uk Or if you are more familiar with the Book of Common Prayer, or have a copy in your possession you can follow the daily prayer format there for Evening Prayer.

What is most important is that we are together in earnestly praying. Not everyone has access to a computer or iphone but many of you will have a copy of the Bible and so each week you can join in by reading one of the Psalms, or stopping to say the Lord's Prayer at 7p.m. on Wednesdays.

We are also going to experiment with a virtual prayer group and if you are interested in joining this then please drop David an email at david.ward@brindlestjames.co.uk

Worship

There are also many ways we can continue to be Church and worship the Lord our God together even if we can't physically be in our beautiful ancient church building. For those of us with computers, tablets or smart phones we can connect via our Brindle St James YouTube channel. We can join, on screen, David and others leading worship. This will include:

- Maundy Thursday reflection at 7 p.m. – Sam Nicol
- Palm Sunday reflection and passion reading. At 10 a.m. – James Mawdesley
- Good Friday, Time at the Cross at 10 a.m. – Rev. David Ward
- Easter Sunday Eucharist Service at 10 a.m. – Rev. David Ward

A Cross in the Window

Many will miss the blessing and distribution of Palm Crosses on Sunday. We would like to encourage every Christian home to make a cross in the best way they can and place it in their window, leaving it there throughout Holy Week. It can be of paper, card, wood –be as imaginative as you like. It will be a sign to our communities that, in the cross of Christ, all the world's ills are healed.

There is also the Blackburn Diocese YouTube channel through which the Bishops and Archdeacons are providing regular reflections and services and the Diocesan has some great resources on www.blackburn.anglican.org. Another Diocesan priest wrote the following about using this odd time of lockdown well.

"In the hermitage of your heart, see beauty, find comfort; simply be blessed. At least some of the time rest with Mary whilst so many others rush around with Martha. And know that you are loved and valued in this place."

While we are truly grateful for the God given modern technology, we know that not everyone has it or is able to use it. We can still be Church and worship together on Sundays via:

- Radio 4 Sunday Worship at 8.10 a.m.
- Palm Sunday Service on BBC1 at 11.00 a.m
- Songs of Praise at 1.15 pm.

No matter how you choose to worship during the coming weeks, just be aware that across the parish, the county and the world many others are doing the same and are with us as Church and at all times God is truly with us, amongst us, caring for us.

Sunday School.

Sunday School is sadly not currently being held and the Community Hall is closed. Cathy and all the Sunday School leaders are still providing activities for the children to do at home. They are keeping connected through their WhatsApp group and email and Facebook as their established ways of staying in touch. You can also contact Cathy by email at arnold.slaney@btopenworld.com or Claire at daveclairefred@aol.com

There is still plenty of opportunity for children who don't normally attend Sunday School to get involved and the activities and materials from Sunday School will be made generally available via our Brindle St. James Church news and notices page links here: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11478/news/>

Pastoral Team

The current Coronavirus restrictions are, for some, causing increased anxiety, hardship and loneliness and of course people continue to need and value pastoral care. Brindle St James' Pastoral Team has continued to provide support to people via regular telephone calls. If you would like to be called, or know someone who would benefit from contact with the Pastoral Team then please don't hesitate to ring Millie Santus on 01254 853432 or Lynn Packer on 01772 323267.

Brindle Voice

The production of paper copies of the Brindle Voice has been temporarily suspended, but articles and news are being shared on line. Alison Bond is continuing to collect pieces of news and reflections to be used in upcoming editions. We will make sure that any news items in the coming weeks get circulated via other mechanisms too. Please continue to send content for the Brindle Voice to Alison via brindle.voice@brindlestjames.co.uk

Generous Giving

Many people and businesses are finding it difficult to make ends meet at the moment with all the disruption that we face because of Covid 19. We, as a church community at Brindle St James, are facing exactly the same type of problems. Now that the church is closed, we have lost the way to give gifts by Stewardship envelopes or by cash in the collection plate. So the only current income is from those who give by automatic bank transfer which means the overall income has fallen significantly. Our bills however, have only reduced marginally and so we can imagine the effects of this to our church in both the short term as well as the long term.

As a church, Brindle St James wholly relies on donations to operate and provide care and support to everyone in this community. Not only do we want to continue this and indeed do more, and continue to be strengthened by the knowledge of our love and fellowship for each other and the love our Lord has for us. In the current circumstances we are asking, for the benefit of our church, that you consider giving by bank transfer as opposed to cash. This will ensure our church's ministry can continue and be sustained at the end of this health crisis. Moreover, it is simpler and it reduces the work of our treasurer, Jenny and the counting team

If you can switch to standing order payment or make a one-off donation our bank details are:

Account name: **St James Church Brindle**

Account No **71898175**

Sort Code **40-37-25**

You can easily set this up either using on-line banking or by downloading the form from Google by searching for '**Brindle St James Church**' which takes you to our page on a 'Church Near You' and scrolling down the left menu to '**Bank Details and Gift Aid**'. You can obviously stop your gifts at any time. If you want a hard copy of the form, please ring Richard, our Treasurer on 07713 390722

Please protect yourself against fraud. Take care to enter the account numbers correctly. This is the only bank account to use for bank transfers to THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL of ST JAMES' CHURCH, BRINDLE. Nobody from the church will ever contact you with a direct request to transfer amounts between bank accounts.

If you don't feel this is possible, then please keep putting your Stewardship Gifts into your envelopes or keeping the cash in a separate jar and we will reap your harvest when the church is open again. We appreciate all you do and all your generous gifts.

Remain Scam Aware

Please do remember to be scam aware. The general advice is to beware of links on every message and on every device. The UK's national fraud and cyber reporting centre is here at [Action Fraud](#) for reported fraud; from individuals and large corporations.

Keeping in Contact

We can still be Church through all the mechanisms set out above, but most importantly through our own prayers. We encourage you to make the most of the technology and the opportunities to pray and worship together or just to have a sense of connection with others. We very much hope that you will reach out to each other in the coming days and here is a summary of all the contact details mentioned above:

- Reverend David Ward, Rector at david.ward@brindlestjames.co.uk or telephone 01254 851053
- Church wardens - Martin Coane 01254 853803 and Susan Boulton 01772 323481
- A Church Near You website : <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11478/news/>
- St James' Brindle on Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/stjamesbrindle>
- Brindle St. James on Twitter – <https://twitter.com/BrindleStJames>
- Brindle St James Church on YouTube – <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXKDeQf5yRqhRD87sCXWHiA>

If you would like to be kept informed on a regular basis or to receive messages (even when Coronavirus is past) then please forward your contact details i.e. name, home address, email address, telephone number to david.ward@brindlestjames.co.uk Please do be assured that your details will be kept confidential and managed in line with the General Data Protection Rules (GDPR).

Home as a place of prayer and worship

Yesterday Archdeacon Mark Ireland (via a YouTube video) commented that we are living in disorientating times and that there is a profound sense of exile as we are forced to stay apart and keep our physical distance. Archdeacon Mark illustrated this with the experience of the Israelites. With their profound sense of place and the centrality of the Temple they had to work out how to worship when the Temple had been destroyed and they were far from what was familiar. He turned our attention to Daniel Chapter 6 and reminded us of how the home became the place of prayer and worship. Archdeacon Mark explained that the time of exile in the Old Testament was a time of significant spiritual renewal and it was a time when God's people went back to their founding stories and that when the people of the Old Testament returned to the Promised Land they lived differently and returned single heartedly to worship God, but in a different way.

We are therefore, encouraged that we may use this time of exile to rethink how we are Church for a new generation. The success of any organism is its ability to adapt and change more quickly than the environment around it and that is the same for the living organism that is the Church of God. If we focus on restarting everything as it was before, then the painful experience of exile will have been wasted. **“So may God give each of us Grace to live hopefully in this time of enforced exile, to hear his voice? That we might return from exile changed people ready to do church differently. That we might reach a changed community with the unchanging Gospel of Christ”. Amen**

Easter a time of Hope...

David and the Parochial Church Council pray that God blesses you and keeps you all safe and well and joined in Faith. We look forward to being together again in the warm welcome of Brindle St James' Church. Until then please take the opportunities available to be Church, to pray to God and worship him in our own homes and connected with our own families and to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee, there you will see him.' Matthew 28: 5-7

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28: 18-20

With Much Love and Blessings

David and the PCC.
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