

Our Response to the Covid-19 Virus Situation – 20 March 2020

Greetings in these difficult times,

I am communicating with you all to let you know where things stand.

Firstly as God's people we are encouraged to be beacons of light and hope in the places where we are, and to be aware of the peace that God alone can give at this time.

Secondly, our meetings and church services are able to continue at this time, provided we follow the guidelines we have received from the Diocese and the Ministry of Health.

This means no physical contact when greeting each other or sharing the peace – so refrain from shaking hands, hugging etc. Let's be creative and use other ways of acknowledging each other – elbow bumps, big smiles, bowing our heads, waving, foot taps ...

We provide hand sanitiser and encourage people to use it as they enter the building.

We seek to keep everything clean and follow strict hygiene practices around communion. This means that communion will be bread only, with the wafers being carefully distributed. There will be wine on the altar but this will only be consumed by the celebrant. I know that this may be hard for some but Bishop Ross writes: “it has been a long-accepted practice within the Anglican church that to receive communion in one kind fully conveys the efficacy of the sacrament.”

We have also been instructed not to pass objects around – which means that our offering plate will be in a set position and people asked to place their offerings in it, and it will then be taken to the front at the usual time. We are also discouraged from handing out Prayer Books and Hymn Books, rather to use Powerpoint or service sheets. Alongside this we are to keep a “safe distance” from each other.

If anyone is feeling unwell, has a cold or flu symptoms, then they are to please stay home. We will be seeking to offer pastoral care in an appropriate manner.

It perhaps even more important at this time that we gather to encourage and support one another, and to pray for our community, nation and world. And we are able to do so, if we follow the guidelines.

I encourage us all to act sensibly and to look out for our neighbours as we seek to show God's love and presence in the midst of all that is happening.

And I encourage us all to pray – you may like to use the “Community Focus” prayer below.

Please contact me if you have any concerns, are aware of a person in need, or just need someone to talk to.

In faith and hope,

Shalom,

Wayne

Rev Wayne Thornton, Priest in Charge, Mangawhai and Wellsford Mission Districts

Lord, we know with no doubt that You are bigger than the threat of anything, especially illnesses. We pray that those who have the virus will be healed, and that its spread would slow and be soon eradicated. We pray for those who are caring for the sick. Protect them with a hedge of protection against the germs of coronavirus and help those who are giving to be protected as they nurse others back to health. We pray that the government agencies would have wisdom and skill in containing the epidemic, and that doctors and nurses would be energized for their work. We pray for scientists and biomedical engineers scrambling to invent a way to cure and immunize against this new virus.

Gracious Heavenly Father, please comfort those who are living in fear and free them from the bondage that anxiety creates within. Remind them that You are still in control. Grant the serenity that comes only from the Prince of Peace. Help those who are living in unease to trust You in this time so that in times to come we may rest assured that You will be faithful and be with us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.