

From Edward:

On the second Sunday of July, churches across the denominations observe *Sea Sunday*: Historically a day to prayerfully consider our mission to seafarers, but in more recent times it is also a day to turn our intentions to the marine ecosystem and our impact and reliance upon it.

With the good news of declining rates of infection, hospital admissions and mortality in our local borough and across the nation we begin to see the tide of Coronavirus drawing out, and with lockdown restrictions easing we take our tentative steps outward.

But when the tide goes out there are certain things we need to keep in mind: The wet sand and the mudflats carry their own hazards, the tide could indeed come back in again, and as we look out to sea we see that even though we can see a bit more of the beach there's still a whole ocean of water in front of us!

So it is that as we ease lockdown restrictions at St John's we do so cautiously. We are going to continue to 'bookend' our Sunday opening hours with Mattins and Evening Prayer for the next couple of weeks as we make preparations to safely celebrate Holy Communion, and we remain mindful that many of our congregation are still shielding, self-isolating, and anxious about entering the church.

One ease in restrictions this week, however, is that whilst we have previously asked those over seventy not to volunteer in supervising the church building during opening hours, we can now open up this area of our ministry *providing those volunteering feel safe and comfortable in doing so*. So if you are over seventy (or have been '21' for 49 years or more) then please do send me an email if you can volunteer an hour on a Sunday - but please do not feel under any pressure to do so.

We're also conscious that those at the other end of the age spectrum have found the past few months particularly difficult - many of our youngest members have had little to no contact with other children since March and it's a difficult time for their families too. Whilst we've been able to open for private prayer and the daily offices these are no substitute for our staple ministries of Toddler Church, Sunday School and Family Service. With this in mind I feel we should begin to look at a way of bringing families together - perhaps something involving a 'Bring and Don't Share' picnic and an outdoor act of worship? These are tentative ideas at the moment so please email me if you have any thoughts, and particularly if you have a family who would be interested in participating.

These are small and cautious steps at the moment, but they are steps nonetheless and there is a sense that, after months adrift in a bewildering

ocean, the lights are a little bit brighter and our battered boats may find their way back into the harbour.

Stay safe!

Edward

Church Open: St John's is open on Sundays from 9am-3.30pm, with Mattins at 9am and Evening Prayer at 3pm Our capacity is limited and social distancing measures are in place. Please read them carefully before you enter the building (a copy is attached to this email), and note that you will be expected to bring a facemask. Please see the Bexley Team News for opening arrangements at our sister churches.

Mattins and Evening Prayer: Whilst we have endeavoured to produce orders of service that can be used as safely as possible, we would encourage those who can to download the Church of England's *Daily Prayer* app and change the settings to 'Traditional' in order to follow the services on Sunday.

Volunteers Needed: We are incredibly grateful to those who have stepped forward to assist with supervising the church during opening hours. If you would like to step forward and join this rota please email Edward (fr.edwrdbarlow@gmail.com). Please do not volunteer if you are currently shielding.

Needing support?: The current global situation is a cause of anxiety and worry for many of us. If you need someone to talk to, spiritual support, or if you are looking for assistance with shopping or collecting medication please contact Edward at fr.edwardbarlow@gmail.com or call 01322521786.

Suspended Sermon: Edward's sermons are available [here](#). This week's sermon is entitled 'The Secret of the Hattifatteners

Giving: St John's continues to need your support financially throughout the current emergency. If you wish to give regularly please use the standing order form attached to this email or for a one off giving please use our [JustGiving Page](#). If you have a social media presence please also help us out by sharing this link.

EasyFundraising: If you're shopping online please remember you can give to St. John's by shopping via [our Easy Fundraising page](#). There is also a link from our website.

Social Media: Remember you can engage with us on Facebook ([/stjohnsbexley](#)) and Twitter ([@stjohnsbexley](#)).

Memory Cafe: For anyone in Bexley Borough living with dementia and those who

care for them, to offer friendship and support, the *Christ Church Erith Memory Cafe* will take place over Zoom on Thursdays from 10.45am-11.45am. For access details please contact Christchurch Erith Project Worker Jacki Clement at cceprojectworker@hotmail.com.

Rochester Cathedral: Rochester Cathedral celebrating Choral Evensong [via their website](#), using material produced prior to lockdown. Please also see the Cathedral website for details about the Cathedral's reopening plans.

Prayers for use during the Coronavirus Outbreak: The Church of England has produced a booklet of prayers to aid devotions at home during the current crisis. It is available [here](#), along with other prayer resources and advice (scroll down the webpage for the booklet).

Daily Hope: The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a free national phonenumber with hymns, reflections and prayers to enable worship from home throughout the lockdown. Details are available [here](#) and you may wish to pass the information on to those you know who cannot access resources online.

Domestic Abuse: As you will have heard, the current situation has seen an unpleasant increase in incidences of Domestic Abuse. Bishop Simon has commended recent advice issued by the national church in response to this and details can be found [here](#)

Bexley Team News: The weekly newsletter connecting us with our sister churches across the Bexley Team is attached to this email and includes a reflection from our new Team Curate, Matt Hodder.

Toddler Church Fun! Children's activities continuing to explore the story of Daniel are attached to this email. Please note that next week's Toddler Church activities on Jonah will be the final one of the term.

Devotional Pattern: Readings for the forthcoming week, with suggested hymns, prayer intentions and questions to consider are attached to this email.

This Week Please Pray For:

... those who live and work on and near the sea.

... the marine ecosystem, those working to protect our seas and our own impact on God's world.

...all currently suffering with Covid-19.

...all are who continuing to shield or self-isolate.

...the sick in need of our prayers, Gladys Verran, Amy Jones, Barbara, Mavis Johnson, Samantha Pout, Ray Mace, Marie Berry, Maggie Rankine, Ann Harlow, Joyce Forrest, Dorothy Samuel, John Beddison, David Watkins, Nicola Johns and any others known to you.

...the recently departed, Irene Taylor.

...those whose anniversaries fall at this time, Reynolds Fisher, Theresa Shears, Jane Bates, Victor Bloomfield, Dorothy Lines, Clifford Taylor.

...residents living in and around our parish.

Keep us, good Lord,
Under the shadow of Your mercy
In this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
And lift up all who are brought low;
That we may rejoice in Your comfort
Knowing that nothing can separate us
From Your love In Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen

Our Safeguarding Statement can be read at

<http://www.stjohnsbexley.org/safeguardingstatement.html>

If you or someone you are concerned about is in immediate danger, please call the police on 999

<https://bexleywomensaid.org.uk/>

<https://mensadviceline.org.uk/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19>

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