



From Edward:

*When the boys come back
They will not be the same.*

(Siegfried Sassoon 1917)

Last year I was asked by a number of people whether we'd be observing Remembrance Sunday 'the same way as we've done every year'. Having only been in post for a few months at that point my response was that, yes, we would, but meant the only person who didn't know what we'd be doing was me!

This year we have no choice but to change the pattern of our observances: The nature of the pandemic, and the Lockdown restrictions mean the village cannot cluster onto the pavement as we did before, we cannot join together in song, and it simply would not be safe for our elderly local veterans and those who remember life in wartime to join us in our gathering. We must do things differently.

Ingrained practices and rituals can be a double edged sort: Remembrance is embedded into our cultural behaviour and memory to the point where we can't not remember the lives lost in conflict at this time, but at the same time it can become easy to slip into routine and motion: We perform the choreography without understanding the significance of the dance.

And so when things aren't quite the same we are pushed sometimes uncomfortably to ask some important questions:

- What are we doing?
- Whom are we doing it for?
- Why are we doing it?

Our actions must be intentional and justified in ways they have not been before as we reinvent the ceremony for the present circumstances and by doing that we engage with something we have been doing for a long time in a fresh and thought-provoking way which has the power to make our Act of Remembrance richer and more authentic.

I hope you will watch the pre-recorded Act of Remembrance which you can find via the Church Website from Sunday Morning. You may even choose to do so at 11am, wearing your poppy as you do so. You will find some bits familiar; The wording is all taken from the same order of service we have been using for several years now and we filmed outside, at the War Memorial, standing in the usual places shortly after 11am.

At the same time, a lot will be different – and you may find this uncomfortable. I would ask that you spend time with this discomfort in prayer and reflection. Seek God in this discomfort and try to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Then offer all that you have collected to God along with your prayers for those whose lives have been changed and continue to be changed irreparably by the impact of war, armed conflict and terror over the ages.

As has been well publicised nationally, public worship in places of worship has once again been suspended, however we are allowed to enter the church building for individual prayer. I would ask you only to do this should you feel comfortable (there should be no compulsion at a time such as this) and please observe our social distancing and hygiene measures along with Track & Trace systems (More details on this below).

A very welcome change is that we expect the Vicarage Broadband to be upgraded later this week which will greatly enhance our online engagement in the forthcoming weeks. A weekly joint Team Ministry Zoom service has already been mooted to begin from the 15th November and details for engaging with this will be distributed when we have them. Please be aware though that our online engagement can only ever be a *supplement* rather than a *substitute* for what we do and who we are as a church: If you don't have the resources or expertise to engage with our online content – that's fine. If pressing needs or dependent family members mean you can't make the time to engage virtually – that's fine too. If things just feel so bad that you want to spend Sunday morning hiding under the duvet wishing the whole pandemic to be over – that's utterly fine and entirely understandable!

A final point is that the Archbishops have suggested that the forthcoming month be a *month of prayer* for the church and the nation. I hope the devotional materials we provide in the weeks ahead will assist in your spiritual reflections and prayers and that we will all find ways of making the best of this time in building our relationship with God.

Stay safe!
Edward

Services are Suspended until 2nd December at the earliest, but St John's is open for individual prayer on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Needing Support: Team pastoral support is being coordinated by Assistant Curate Rev'd Matt Hodder. If you, or someone you know, is requiring assistance with accessing food, medicine, essential shopping or other need (or simply wants a chat!) please contact Matt on 07889873125 or matthodder10@gmail.com.

Remembrance of the Fallen: In collaboration with our friends at the Old Bexley Ex-Servicemen's Club, a pre-recorded Act of Remembrance, filmed at the Village War Memorial prior to the current lockdown restrictions, is available to view via our website: www.stjohnsbexley.org from the Morning of Sunday 8th November. The Church is open on Sunday and Wednesday 11th November as part of our regular opening hours. **We ask that large groups do not congregate in the church or at the War Memorial during this time.** Details of Remembrance observances at our sister churches in the team are available in this week's Team News.

Suspended Sermon: Edward's sermons continue to be available [here](#) and become live from Sunday mornings onward. This week's reflection is entitled 'Siegfried Sassoon: Three Poems for Remembrance'.

Living in Love & Faith Conference: In response to the forthcoming publication of the *Living in Love & Faith* report, which seeks to help the Church of England understand better the current questions surrounding gender, sexuality and identity, the newly formed Rochester MOSAIC group (Movement Supporting Anglicans for an Inclusive Church)



will be holding a Zoom Conference on the morning of Tuesday 17th November. Places are limited so book soon at www.livinginloveandfaith.eventbrite.co.uk. A flyer is attached to this email.

Situations Vacant: We have a number of roles and activities which require volunteers to assist with the running and growth of our church. Please see the attached 'Situations Vacant' pack and contact Edward on fr.edwardbarlow@gmail.com if you would like more information on any of the positions advertised.

Bexley Foodbank: Our Foodbank Donation Point remains open and you can bring your donations when the Church is open on Sundays and Wednesday. You can also give financially [here](#).

The Real Advent Calendar: There's still time to order yours and if you don't need one, please consider buying one for the Bexley foodbank. Please see the email sent out last weekend or email Julia for details. £3.99 each and orders need to be received by 9pm on Monday 9th November so that we can get them to you in time for the start of Advent julia.wickham1@ntlworld.com



Daily Psalms: As we are being encouraged to observe a Month of Prayer, Rev'd Matt Hodder will be sending out a Daily Psalm over email or WhatsApp to provide a sense of prayerful togetherness over the new Lockdown period. To participate, please contact Matt on matthodder10@gmail.com or 07889873125.

Parish Office: Tuesday office hours have been suspended due to Covid Tier-Two restrictions. We will reinstate our usual times when we return to Tier-One, in the meantime, for Baptism and Wedding enquiries, please email Edward.

Church Open: St John's is open during the day on Sundays and Wednesdays for Individual Prayer. Please collect a laminate card from the table by the door and leave it in your pew.

Track & Trace: In order to support the NHS in containing the spread of Covid-19, we are keeping Track & Trace information for those who enter the building. There are three ways to give your data:

- 1: By scanning the QR code displayed in the building using the *NHS Covid-19* App.
- 2: By completing the slip provided and placing it in the Track & Trace box (please use your own pen).
- 3: By emailing Edward (fr.edwardbarlow@gmail.com) directly with your name and the date and time of your visit. Please mark the subject header: St John's Visitor Track & Trace.

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*).

Talkline: If you're feeling lonely, isolated, stressed or anxious *Counselling Matters Bexley's*

new *Talkline* offers free, non-judgemental counselling and support and can also give you information on other relevant services. Freephone: 08000472600 or email mail@cmbtalk.org. The line is open from 5pm-9pm every week day and 9am-9pm on weekends and bank holidays.

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 have been 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.

Toddler Church Fun! We are still considering how to safely hold our Toddler Church in line with social distancing and hygiene requirements. We are grateful for your patience and support during this time. Toddler Church activity packs from last term are still available on our website. If you would like us to produce further resources in a similar style then please email Edward.

Devotional Pattern: Readings for November with suggested prayer intentions are attached to this email.

Face coverings: Please be aware that it is a requirement that face coverings must be worn in places of worship unless you have a legitimate exemption. Thank you for your cooperation.

This Week Please Pray For:

... Those serving in the Armed Forces.

... Those who grieve the victims of armed conflict.

...All at risk in places of violence and terror.

...all currently suffering with Covid-19.

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

...the sick in need of our prayers, Gill Rogers, Carol & Peter Amura, George Berry, Margaret Quick, Gladys Verran, 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.

....those whose anniversaries fall at this time, Derek Midwinter.

... And all the fallen of war including those named on the Village War Memorial.

*Merciful God, we offer you the fears in us
that have not yet been cast out by love:
may we accept the hope you have placed in the
hearts of all people,
and live lives of justice, courage and mercy;
through Jesus Christ our risen redeemer.
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>