



From Revd Trudie Wigley Update 3

Wednesday 25th March 2020

The angel said to Mary "*Do not be afraid*" (Luke 1:30)

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Today we celebrate the Annunciation of Our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is one of only nine Principal Feasts in the Church of England, and in the calendar of many Christian denominations. Today is when we remember the angel Gabriel being sent to Mary to announce that she was to bear the Son of God. The angel spoke to her saying "*Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you!*". Yet what we learn next from Scripture is that she was troubled by these words from Gabriel.

I expect many of us at the moment are troubled by the words we are hearing. There are no easy ways to express the severity of the situation, and particularly what we know we will be facing in 1-2 weeks' time. Many words on the internet are full of fear and trouble and can be consuming – if you need a break from it give yourself permission to pause for a while. I have certainly needed to in order to remain mentally healthy and close to my God.

Gabriel sensed that Mary was troubled by the words he had said and he reassured her saying "*Do not be afraid*". These words are for us too. Mary was part of the God's promise of hope for the world and because we share in that hope, this means that proclamation to not be afraid is for us too. Mary chose to calm her troubled heart and say "yes" to God to carrying his Son. My prayer is that we can hear God's messenger saying to us "*Do not be afraid*" to enable us to calm our hearts and say "yes" to whatever it is God is wanting from us in this time of confinement. What is God saying to you?

A number of us continue to "meet" to think through practicalities of how we might be church - technology has been wonderful, and we have laughed together as we have muddled our way through. A witty Chris Rose has renamed the Dorcan Cobra group "DEBRA" – the Dorcan Ecumenical Briefing Room – so that is what we are called from now on! From our meetings there are a few things to share.

Facebook pages and groups: We will be looking to post key messages and communications, and also live-stream worship on the open Facebook page called "*Dorcan Church Notice Board: St Paul's and St Timothy's*". Please do find it and like it so that you can be kept up to speed with what's going on and join in future live-streaming. The Dorcan Church closed group is continuing – it's great – but to enable the ongoing confidentiality of the group, to open up what we are doing to others, and ensure key messages are not lost in the busy-ness of the closed group, we need to focus a little more on the open page of Dorcan Church Notice Board. Here's a URL to help you find it
<https://www.facebook.com/stpaulsstimothysswindon/>

Technology: Rev Techno Rob is looking into YouTube and other platforms on which to show worship services, post crafty ideas etc. In the meantime, on the Noticeboard Facebook page we can upload videos and will start to live stream.

Worship:

Sunday and mid-week: Thank you for all your encouraging feedback on our first attempt last Sunday – and your patience! With so many other possibilities on-line we were delighted that you chose to tune in, expressing that being with your church family worshipping together was important.

We are going to continue providing on-line worship opportunities. This will be focused on streaming Sunday worship and also a mid-week thought for the day. This week (commencing 23rd March) Rev Stuart will be sharing a mid-week thought with us via uploaded video on Facebook, and I will be taking a service of Holy Communion on Sunday 29th at 10:30am, hopefully live-streaming from home. We are also intending to continue with our normal Holy Week services, so we can all travel to Easter together. More in due course.

Daily: At 9:30am and 7:30pm each day I encourage you to join in with others in the Dorcan Church and pray wherever you are at that time. Do use the opportunity to phone someone and pray with them. If you're not sure what to say and it feels odd, then perhaps say the Lord's Prayer together – what a wonderful prayer it is!

Additional ideas: A group are also looking at posting ideas for our youngsters and families to do at home to keep them worshipping and learning. We are also hearing of on-line coffee mornings, bible study, nights at home down the pub! You are a creative lot and this is a super way to stay connected.

Pastoral:

Contacting people: The link team, and the additional team who have been making calls, have nearly got around to phoning everyone. Even if it doesn't quite go to plan, everyone in the church should receive at least one phone call. If you haven't had a call and are waiting for yours, can I ask you to be proactive and consider phoning your link instead? They are working extremely hard and would appreciate the support and your prayers.

On my heart are those who are not on-line. Please do phone those you know who are not on-line so they remain connected to us all. This will mean a lot to them.

Helpers: In the next weeks the situation is likely to get increasingly stretched with more people needing practical help. If you are under 70, no underlying health concerns, no symptoms, and if your domestic arrangement allows etc. please could you consider helping the church family practically e.g. with shopping if needs be? Please let me, Sue and Barbara know, together with your phone number. Thank you.

St Paul's building: You may already have seen that our buildings are no longer open for private prayer. However, if you go past St Paul's you may see it open. This is because the nursery is remaining open for the children of keyworkers, and also Blood Donors are desperately short of blood and looking to come to St Paul's.

Community: Naturally we are called to look after our neighbours and please do continue in this. Sadly, in a few areas, some people are using this opportunity for fraud, including offering help saying that are from the local church. Therefore, please do help in a personal way as a neighbour rather than more formally on behalf of Dorcan Church.

Any larger community response to the situation is best affected through other well-structured organisations rather than Dorcan setting up its own. If you feel you can help, here these are some channels:

Swindon Food Collective: They are temporarily closed to organise an adjusted service and hence collections are paused. However, please do support them financially. Details on their website. <https://www.swindonfoodcollective.org/>

Compassionate Swindon: Swindon Borough Council has teamed up with Voluntary Action Swindon and the Volunteer Centre Swindon to help pair volunteers with those who have no one to help them. The organisation will ensure there is adequate recruitment with regards to Safeguarding and is a good way to help others whom we may not know are in need. Please consider helping by registering on their website <http://vas-swindon.org/coronavirus-help-page/>

NHS volunteers: Our amazing NHS is looking for 250,000 volunteers, including at the GWH. The reality is that some of our church family are likely to need to seek medical help at the hospital and this is a good way to support them. If you can help volunteer and free up medical staff for other tasks, please consider volunteering. Here is the website as to how to do that. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/03/your-nhs-needs-you-nhs-call-for-volunteer-army/>

As I close, I bring us back to Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel - "*Do not be afraid*" he said. My constant prayer for you all is that you will not be afraid by what is happening. We have the sure and certain hope that whatever becomes, however hard, however loud our groaning, however thick our tears, that God is with us, and we are with each other. In him we find our strength and our peace.

I love you all and will continue to pray for you all regularly. So,
Shalom my friends. Until we meet again.

Trudie x