

Dear Friends in Leam Valley and beyond,

It seems that lockdown is creaking at the seams. Some are desperate to go to beauty spots in the glorious weather, while others are doubtful about going out because of the number of new daily cases of C-19. Some are shielding, with great patience.

The BBC website has a story called 'Secret Spreaders', about an Addenbrook's Hospital survey, where all the staff were tested for C-19; and one nurse tested positive who had had no symptoms at all. She was horrified to realise that she'd been treating patients while having the virus. Those without symptoms are called asymptomatic; my concern is that there may be several asymptomatic people among us – maybe me! Yet I cannot be tested without evidence of symptoms.

So we still need to be very alert, staying at home, and when out staying 2 metres apart; washing hands, catching sneezes and coughs in hankies, not touching our faces; and praying that this destructive plague will soon be gone.

My great disappointment is that the places of worship are still closed, even for private prayer. If car-showrooms are open and bookshops too, why are our churches still closed? If we can have physical and mental needs satisfied, are spiritual needs to be put aside as irrelevant? Our need for the quiet spaces, where there's a sense of otherness, or something beyond our mortal coil, is vital.

The plan at present is that places of worship will be open for private prayer, sometime after the 15th June; and before opening, our beautiful churches need to prepare; firstly by airing and cleaning; so if you are free to help, please get in touch with your local churchwarden, don some disposable gloves and come and help at an arranged time. Cleaning is now allowed.

Then also we'll need to think about where people can sit, and whether to provide hand-washing facilities or sanitiser, though that is in short supply! Your safety is paramount.

At the moment our priests Barbara and Anne are allowed to enter the church for private prayer, so please be encouraged to know that we are praying for you, and that your prayers will be answered too.

Deitrich Bonhoffer, an esteemed theologian who stood against the Nazi regime, said, "Only a suffering God can help." God is with us, urging us to trust him as he walks with us through this troubling time.

Prayers at the time of Covid-19:

Lord Jesus Christ,
grant to our government great wisdom,
to our press generosity of spirit,
to our frontline staff, fortitude and protection,
and to all who are suffering,
the knowledge of the greatness of your love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Love generously

Share liberally

Enjoy beauty

Embrace kindness

And make a dwelling place for the Lord Jesus Christ;

And the Blessing of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you now and always, Amen.