



## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) ST MARY'S CHURCH THORPE CONTINUITY PLAN**

There are many unknowns about the development of this virus over the coming weeks and months; this plan will be revisited at least weekly and kept under review as circumstances change. Our aim is to ensure as far as possible the continued mission and ministry of St Mary's across Thorpe Parish and beyond where support is needed, along with the maintenance of the critical ongoing business of the parish. This plan has been agreed by Thorpe PCC on Monday 16 March 2020. St Mary's Church is following all Church of England Guidance and more information can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

**The contents of this plan will be updated in accordance with national guidelines and protocols. It will be kept under constant review by the Church Leadership Team.**

### **1. Contact Information**

*For the Church Leadership Team & St Mary's Parish Office email*  
[stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com](mailto:stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com) – this email is checked every day.

*For pastoral & worship/prayer enquiries the Incumbent is the first person to contact:*  
**Father Damian Miles** – Vicar of Thorpe; 01932 565986 – [damomiles@btopenworld.com](mailto:damomiles@btopenworld.com)

*His deputies for pastoral matters are:*

**Father Gerard Mee** – Assistant Curate (1<sup>st</sup> Deputy) – [gerardmee@yahoo.com](mailto:gerardmee@yahoo.com)

**Mother Jo Winn-Smith** – Assistant Curate (2<sup>nd</sup> deputy) – [jowinnsmith@hotmail.com](mailto:jowinnsmith@hotmail.com)

*You may also need to contact the Churchwardens:*

Mrs Margaret Roberts 01932 562152 & Mr Barry Huxley 01932 564168

*Hall bookings:*

Mrs Jenny Bright - [ascotladiesday@btinternet.com](mailto:ascotladiesday@btinternet.com) – 01932 560589

### **2. Communication**

Visit [www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk](http://www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk) for the most up to date information

and also our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StMarysChurchThorpe/>

We will keep our external church notice boards and weekly notice sheet / mailer updated, along with the Church website and Facebook page, to provide information on services and availability. The Mailer will continue to be issued on a Friday. The circulation of printed newsletters will be reviewed in line with guidance as it is updated.

To join the weekly mailer\* please email: [stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com](mailto:stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com)

The Church Leadership Team will endeavour to keep St Mary's Church available for regular worship throughout the CORONAVIRUS outbreak and seek to maintain pastoral support and community engagement, within the bounds of guidance from the government and local authority. We will follow the policies set out by the Church of England.

### **3. General Hygiene**

- Hand-sanitiser is available at the entrances to the church and Rutherwyke Room which everyone should use on entering the buildings. All are encouraged to wash their hands regularly and avoid physical contact with other people.
- Tissues and a bin have been provided at both entrances.
- Notices/posters have been displayed to remind people of the general hygiene advice.
- Surfaces in church will be wiped down after services.
- Paper towels are only to be used once for the drying of hands and disposed of immediately in the bins provided.

- The collection by baskets has been suspended. Instead, a 'static' collection plate will be located near the entrance door of the church. However, the congregation are asked to set up a standing order to support the church instead of giving by cash. Alternatively, donations can be made via the Facebook page or church website using PayPal.
- Should the guidance change, single use service sheets will be printed for Sunday worship to include all hymns/music and hymn books removed from the chair backs.
- Ministers of the Eucharist and servers will wash their hands immediately before and after distributing communion.
- Additional care will be taken with refreshments. All cups and utensils must be washed in the dishwasher on the long hot cycle. From now on only wrapped biscuits can be served. Should the guidance change, it is anticipated that catering/refreshments may be completely suspended leading up to and during the height of the outbreak.
- The use of holy water stoups has been suspended.
- No objects within the church, including crucifixes and images, should be kissed or unnecessarily touched.
- A review of clergy vesture will be required as ongoing guidance is received.
- The First Aid Kit in the Rutherwyke Room Kitchen and Incident Log Book have been checked and appropriately stocked and Fr Gerard is the point of contact – we ask all those with first aid training to let him know so an up to date list can be prepared.

#### 4. Pastoral

St Mary's Church offers an important public reassurance through 'the sacrament of presence' and being seen to be "present" and available and the Church Leadership Team will do all it can to keep worship, spiritual direction and pastoral support available to all. *This does not include physically visiting those diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who are self-isolating.*

Our local network is important here in Thorpe Parish including Runnymede Borough Council, Thorpe Neighbourhood Forum and TWRA, Thorpe Primary School, TASIS, Thorpe Pre-school Nursery, Churches Together in Egham, local health agencies, funeral directors and other service providers and we will keep them up to date with our policy and practice. The Parish office is willing to hold next of kin details for parishioners who live alone.\* If this applies to you or you would like to know more, please email: [stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com](mailto:stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com).

#### Clergy/Lay visiting

- **No pastoral visits can be undertaken with people who are self-isolating** until isolation ends. Instead, the ministry team will offer pastoral support by email and phone communication.
- When **visiting parishioners at home**, we will need to wash hands before and after giving the sacraments.
- **Visits to people in care homes or hospitals** should follow advice from the staff on infection control. In certain circumstances, we may only maintain telephone contact.

#### Buddy-up care scheme for Thorpe

At St Mary's we wish to maintain the maximum possible pastoral care of our people, the wider church community and parish of Thorpe. The churchwardens will be establishing a 'buddy-up scheme' to provide a weekly telephone call to the sick, housebound and elderly and we hope as many people as possible will help with this. (This plan adheres to national safeguarding policies and hygiene practices.)

#### Funeral Ministry

The Ministry Team at St Mary's are always willing to conduct funerals and that includes people who would not describe themselves as 'religious' or Church of England 'CofE'. We ask that

funeral directors contact the parish office at the earliest opportunity: 01932 565986 – and ALSO send an email to: [stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com](mailto:stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com) and we will endeavour to return their call/email promptly. St Mary's Church will remain available for Funeral/Memorial/Requiem services if possible, within national guidance. If a lock-down situation occurs, the clergy, if permitted, will continue to conduct services at agreed locations, such as graveside or crematorium, with or without a congregation present. The set Church of England fees (plus travel) still apply. It may be necessary for pre-funeral visits to be replaced by phone or other forms of communication.

## 5. Infrastructure

The aim of this plan is to ensure as far as possible the continued mission and ministry of St Mary's Church, Thorpe and the maintenance of the critical ongoing business of this community. The Incumbent, with the support of the Churchwardens and Ministry Team will now take the steps outlined in this continuity plan. It is very important that we prepare for key members of the church team to be out of action for at least two weeks at a time. Where possible we need to cross-train people for essential tasks in the parish so that if a person needs to self-isolate or becomes ill, tasks can still be undertaken. We have identified essential tasks as:

- Pastoral Ministry
- Providing Eucharistic worship in Church, to the housebound and via on-line broadcast
- Service support, H&S, welcome and church management
- Communication via the Mailer, website, Facebook page and weekly newsletter

For this plan to work every member of the church community need to play their part, coordinated by the Ministry Team and Churchwardens.

## 6. Activities

There may come a time when the Church Leadership Team needs to cancel all church bookings, including hire of the Rutherwyke/Wallace Rooms, weddings and services of Holy Baptism in church etc. This will only happen when we have been told we must do so. In the meantime, we ask all those taking part in church activities to adhere to this policy and seek the mutual well-being of all, especially regarding hygiene. Each church group, school activity, hirer or party/event should consider what action must be taken in the event of key people not being available to run the activity. The following should be considered:

1. maintaining an up to date list of contact details for the group
2. deciding at what point the activity will be cancelled
3. decide how members of the group will be kept informed
4. nominate at least one person to be responsible for hygiene
5. notify the Parish Office, Bookings Secretary and Churchwardens of decisions made in this context.

It is likely that some of the people who are on the rota to cover welcome and other duties may need to withdraw. The usual practise remains that wherever possible, if you feel unwell and will be unable to attend please, at the earliest opportunity email round the team and include the parish office. Hopefully someone else will be able to cover for you.

## 7. Finance

A significant proportion of St Mary's income comes from cash collections at services, as well as the letting of our facilities to other groups and organisations. Clearly, if fewer people are coming to church or church gatherings are required to cease, there will be a significant financial impact upon St Mary's Church. This is a situation we share with many charities who are reliant upon the generosity of people and we are thankful for the continued support of so many. Therefore, we are asking all members of our Church Electoral Roll and supporters, as well as all visitors to consider setting up a regular monthly standing order to help the church through this challenging time. We recognise that many families and individuals will themselves have their own financial issues, and

so we are asking those more able to carry a little more of the responsibility for this than usual, hopefully for a short period of time. To set up a standing order with the Church please email [stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com](mailto:stmaryschurchthorpe@outlook.com) for the necessary details.

Donations can also be made via our Church Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/StMarysChurchThorpe/>

and via PayPal on our Parish website: <https://www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk/>

As always, if you can gift-aid your donations that it is much appreciated.

NB: Anyone handling cash should protect themselves from virus transmission by washing hands or using hand gel beforehand and afterwards.

## 8. Social distancing or lock-down

There has been reaction around the world to the onset of the Coronavirus with governments taking measures to reduce social interaction between people in order to halt the spread of the virus. It is not yet clear what measures will follow in the UK. However, there are two scenarios we can plan for:

1. Social Distancing – the perceived or desired degree of remoteness between a member of one social group and the members of another, for example isolating those over 70.
2. Lock-down – when everyone is asked (or mandated by emergency law) to remain at home and churches are among organisations asked to cease physical interaction.
3. Schools closed.

These measures could be required to help slow the rate of infection. In response to the above possibilities:

1. St Mary's will need to identify those in at-risk groups (e.g. over 70 / ongoing medical conditions) who may be asked/required to go into isolation, and their role in church life, assess the impact of them not being available and see if this can be mitigated. We may need to do less in order to maintain our priority functions as Church: worship and pastoral care. Technology, website, online streaming of worship, digital service sheets and the buddy-up scheme will all help to keep this group connected to the regular worship and life of St Mary's. Additional work around help with food/errands/prescriptions etc may need to be identified on an individual basis, if the circumstances and rules permit us to engage in this way. Additional prayer resources will be added to the website.
2. Lock-down scenario – the church can't be used for 'public' access and the church buildings and Vicarage car park are closed. We will need to secure the Lych Gate and Vicarage Driveway gates shut and locked and place appropriate signs on them. Access to the site will be via the Vicarage front small gate only. Depending on the rules, it is anticipated that we would continue to offer worship via technology with live streaming and downloadable via our website as well as service sheets sent digitally with the weekly mailer every Friday (including bible readings and sermon notes for home study). We will also produce a weekly pack of activities (in place of Faith & Fun Group/Family Services) for parents to use with their children. Some printed materials may be circulated to those without internet, again depending upon the guidelines at such a time.
3. As above. Additional resources available on our church website and sent via email every Friday to provide parents with activities suitable for children of different ages. There may be a need to liaise with Runnymede Foodbank about the distribution of lunches for children/families in need. Prayer resources will be updated.

The Reverend Damian Stewart Miles, BTh - Incumbent

Mr Barry Huxley & Mrs Margaret Roberts - Churchwardens

*Thorpe PCC – Monday 16 March 2020, updated 20 March 2020*

*\*Thorpe PCC takes your privacy seriously. We won't pass your contact details to anyone else. To see our privacy notice visit [www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk/policies](http://www.stmaryschurchthorpe.co.uk/policies) and click on the Data Privacy Notice box.*