

Collect for the 4th Sunday of Lent

Merciful Lord,
you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives
and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid
and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Readings today:

Colossians 3.12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him

John 19.25b-27

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were His mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Next week's readings – the 5th Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37.1-14 and John 11.1-45

Please remember in your prayers:

- Bishop Graham, Bishop Alan and Bishop Jonathan;
- all those who have been as mothers to us;
- the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui: Paul Kwong – Archbishop;
- in the Deanery; the Rural Dean, the Lay Chairman, Chapter Clerk, Secretary and Treasurer;
- the Deanery Synod representatives and our representatives on the Diocesan Synod;
- the Church Women's Guild;
- Bellringers;
- those who live or work in Butcher Lane, Caslon Close, Highfield Road and High Terrace;
- those who are unwell or in any kind of trouble including: Mary, Sue & Andrew, Ken, Pam Thomas and David Homan;
- those known to us who have died recently & their families – Judith Cletheroe and Ian Reynolds;
- the anniversaries of the late Terry Potter, Tony Gimmer, John Heazel, Walter Barnard, Peter Milsom, Susan Cole and Margaret Hammond.



22nd March 2020 The Fourth Sunday of Lent

This has been a week like no other for all of us and each day is bringing fresh challenges. Keith has written the following summary which I trust will answer many queries. We are working together to ensure the best spiritual and practical support for you all. Please keep in touch by your preferred means of contact and keep safe. With my love and prayers, *Francis*

Following Church of England guidance, all public worship at the church has now been suspended until further notice. This includes all Sunday worship and all mid-week gatherings and activities. BUT WE HAVE NOT SHUT UP SHOP.

OUR CHURCH REMAINS OPEN during normal daytime hours and available for you to use. Our weekly bulletin with Bible readings, the prayer for the day and information will be published and available from Sunday online and for you to pick up from church if you wish.

The votive candle will remain lit during this difficult time and we invite you if you wish to come and light a candle in church in thought and/or prayer for those you know who may be in need in any way.

We will be recording a Mothering Sunday Holy Communion service which will be available on the website and hopefully via YouTube and Facebook from 10.30am today. **This is not a public service so please do not attend.** It is intended to provide comfort and a sense of continuity to our worship and faith during this time and for any to participate in online. We'll provide more on this in due course.

We are also looking at how we can make more of our daily life as a church available online and, for those who do not use the internet, we are looking at how we may communicate in writing via postal services and our Parish magazine, The Beacon. Keep an eye out for this when it is delivered in April as it should contain further information for you and a letter from the Rector.

The church is going to look very different over the coming weeks and possibly months and we are looking for new ways to serve you, our community, so please do be in touch with us if you wish.

The Rectory Office can be contacted on 01328 862268, and you are also welcome to email us at admin@fakenhamparishchurch.org.uk if you require any further information or help. (17/03/20)

Keith Osborn, Churchwarden

Website – fakenhamparishchurch.org.uk

Facebook - [@fakenhamparishchurch](https://www.facebook.com/fakenhamparishchurch)

A message to the Diocese of Norwich from Bishops Graham, Alan and Jonathan

The Bishops of Norwich, Thetford and Lynn have written a letter of reassurance to everyone in the Diocese in the midst of COVID-19 fears.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Further to the letter from the Archbishops, we write to assure you of our prayers and loving support.

Mother Julian of Norwich lived through anxious times with plagues and uprisings. In her anchorite self-isolation, whilst still hearing the bustle of the street outside, she had a vision of God speaking to her.

"He did not say, 'You shall never have a rough passage, you will never be over-strained, you will never feel dis-eased'; but he did say, 'You will never be overcome.'"

We live in anxious times and we are conscious that many long to hear God say in our own day, "You will never be overcome."

As we enter these next few weeks and months, we are encouraging the whole Diocese of Norwich to do everything with these principles in mind:

To seek to be a Church of living hope.

"Hope is love stretched into the future", wrote the Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf, and during this time we need to keep our eyes on the horizon of God's Kingdom.

To follow government and national church guidance.

"We who are many are one body in Christ and individually we are members one of another", wrote St Paul, reminding us that as a series of interlinked local communities the Church receives wisdom that has been distilled and given to us for the good of all.

To continue to pray.

We know that at the heart of our life as Christians is prayer and we hear the voice of the Psalmist afresh in our own time, "I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer".

To strive to keep each other safe and to practice kindness.

Through our actions and the ways we will minister, we want to do all we can to protect our clergy, lay leaders, congregations and neighbours, asking God to "keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me under the shadow of your wings".

To prioritise pastoral care.

We love and serve our neighbours, as Christ calls us, when we reach out to the vulnerable, those self-isolating, and those who are anxious; offering them our help, support and prayers, because we believe that "The church is the Church only when it exists for others" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

We encourage you to look at the Church of England's website for regular updates in this fast-changing picture and resources for prayer.

God of compassion,
have mercy upon this nation and our world in this time of fear and confusion:
we bring before you those who are suffering and who tend to their needs;
may those in isolation know your comfort and company
and may neighbours show your love in works of care, kindness and prayer;
we pray for the National Health Service and all engaged in scientific research
and we pray too for those upon whose shoulders the yoke of leadership rests,
that in their conversation and communication your still small voice may be heard;
we ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit,
through the One who stretched out his hands to bless and to heal
even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We thank you for your prayers and for your care of others. And we assure you that you are each much in our prayers at this time as we seek new ways of being Church to serve our nation. With every blessing.

*Jonathan, Bishop of Lynn / Graham, Bishop of Norwich
Alan, Bishop of Thetford*

Churches Together

Light a candle of hope: A national call to prayer
Presidents of Churches Together in England have issued a call to prayer for all churches and people of prayer to join on Sun 22nd March, Mothering Sunday.

"This Mothering Sunday, we are calling all churches to a National Day of Prayer and Action. At such a time as this when many are fearful & there is great uncertainty we are reminded of our dependence on our loving Heavenly Father and the future that he holds."

At 7pm this Sunday, light a candle in the windows of your homes as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.

Whether you are continuing to worship as congregations or not, we have the great privilege and freedom to be able to call upon God, wherever we are, individually and corporately, for healing in our nation. We would pray for all in leadership at this time, making decisions about the containment of the COVID-19 virus, for those working in health and social care, and especially for the most vulnerable, whether elderly or those with underlying health conditions.

Alongside your prayers, take the opportunity to telephone or email someone who is isolated, buy some additional food for your local foodbank, or offer to deliver shopping for an elderly neighbour. We may not be able to touch physically, but we can make connections in so many other ways.

"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you" 1 Peter 5:7