

Message to all our parishioners around the benefice

I hope you are all keeping safe and well in these difficult times.

Things have changed at such a pace over the last couple of weeks and much of what we took for granted less than a month ago has become difficult or impossible.

We are working at making sure we keep in touch with everyone in our church communities and beyond, especially those who are having to stay at home to avoid contact with other people.

Some who are in self-isolation have no family members living nearby, so normal daily life can present a real challenge. We are in close contact with Parish Councils and with Swale Borough Council, as well as with a group of volunteers, to offer help with basic supplies where needed. Please let me know if you are in need of help and we will do all we can, along with other local groups such as the Friends of Bredgar Church and other community groups around the benefice.

While we're doing our best to keep in contact with people, inevitably some will fall through the cracks. Please let me know if you are aware of anyone who is lonely or fearful and who would appreciate a call – I encourage people to keep in touch with each other and we in the ministry team are very happy to make telephone contact with people, whether they are church members or not.

The situation, as you can imagine, is having huge implications for the church: there are no regular services; funerals are having to be scaled right down to the bare minimum if they take place in church at all; weddings and Baptisms are having to be postponed. This is a very upsetting time for many people in all kinds of ways.

We are looking at ways of continuing to bring people together by gathering online and we will give details of how to join us for regular acts of worship each week and for Morning Prayer every day during the week.

It may seem hard to imagine at the moment but some positive things will emerge: already we've had several offers of help from some of our younger people and we are making contact with people we have previously met only fleetingly.

Our buildings may be closed but the church is very much alive and active and we will continue to pray for everyone in our communities and to function in different ways, alongside and in cooperation with local authorities and other organisations.

Alan Pinnegar (Vicar) 07402 717325; aepinnegar@gmail.com