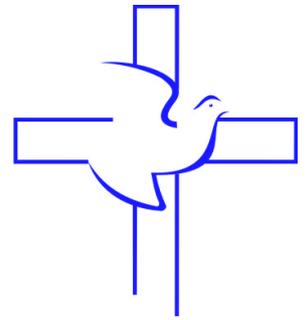


St. Luke's Church, Orchards

Diocese of Johannesburg, - Anglican Church of Southern Africa



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27 March 2020

Dear brothers and sisters

Our first day of the Covid 'Lockdown' is heading toward evening. From what I have seen, most people are observing the 'stay-at-home' order, though I have seen some people wondering up the road and hear of people queuing at shops and children playing in streets.

During my midday prayers I was reading from the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians, where he says:

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:3-6).

I was suddenly struck by the fact Paul was not with the people he was addressing. This is absolutely obvious since it's a letter, but as I am now being forced to communicate by letter and email and video . . . without seeing the people I am speaking to, the fact that most of the New Testament was written in a similar way, to people that the writer was separated from, had a new significance. One wonders what would have been written down if the church members had always been in each other's presence. Their separation has been of inestimable value to us 2 millennia later. And I pray that God will be using this disruption to our lives in a similar way; that he will use it to his glory, even if we cannot see or fathom it ourselves. Our God is able, and he has promised that he will work all things to the good of those who love him. (Rom 8:28) (But note that he has not promised that we will be aware of it at the time!)

As we ready ourselves for 3 weeks of 'isolation' we are putting some things in place.

Volunteers

Shopping

If any of our younger members is prepared to help those who are housebound with some shopping, please let me know. We are arranging this together with the Andrew Murray Dutch Reformed Church (our neighbours) as a service not only to our members but to the local community as well.

Please send the Shirley (shirley@stluke.co.za) your name and contact details and specify that you are a "Shopping Volunteer".

And if anyone needs help with shopping or supplies, please let Shirley know.

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Phoning / Chatting

I suspect that as time moves on a number of people will begin to find the isolation quite isolating. Suddenly people will be cut off from all friends and the interactions that make up normal life (eg. greeting a neighbour, a few words with a shop assistant, comments to other shoppers etc.) So we would like to communicate with everyone in the parish at least once a week.

However, I am sure it is obvious that the few staff we have cannot keep services ‘broadcast’, bulletins published, letters written . . . and phone 200 people.

We would therefore like a number of volunteers (the more the better) who will undertake to phone 8 or 10 St Luke’s members each week. No need to answer questions or pray or lead Bible studies . . . we only want you to find out how they’re doing and chat (about anything at all) for a few minutes. (This is a ministry you could do from your armchair or even your bed!) If the possible cost makes you hesitate, we would be happy to help volunteers who need it.

If you would like to volunteer, please send Shirley your name and contact details and specify that you are a “Phoning Volunteer”. We will then send you the details of the people we would like you to contact, and some ideas of what to do.

Services

On Sunday morning we will load our services onto the Parish YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVTLVQ-XR2pW57Yw-t-qe3Q>) and the Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/St-Lukes-Anglican-Church-Orchards-218935631465047/>) at 08h30. (And hopefully this time the gremlins that tripped us up last week will have been banished!)

Last week a number of people shared the links with people outside of the parish, which was wonderful. We are doing this not only for members, but for the wider community as well.

Please also remember to join us in prayer at 12h00 each day. The clergy can no longer hold a service, but I do go to the church, ring the bell, and do a service on my own.

Regulations

There have been a number of queries regarding the official regulations and what you may and may not do. Douglas Gibson kindly found a news source with many of the questions answered. So, if you have questions please go to

CORONAVIRUS FAQs | All your questions answered <https://m.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/coronavirus-faqs-all-your-questions-answered-20200325?isapp=true>

And if that does not answer your query, Douglas has kindly offered to help find the necessary answers. So, if you have further queries, send an email to admin@stluke.co.za, asking Wendy to forward it to him

As they day passes, and as we are forced out of one another’s presence, though not from our concern and even communication, so I pray, as Paul did for the Philippians,:

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God” (Phil 1:9-11).

Blessings
Ian