



Where all find a welcome and are nurtured in their journey with Christ.

What we're doing during the coronavirus outbreak

Friday 20 March 2020

This week has been both turbulent and challenging, with many fast-changing pieces of advice and with many people suddenly finding themselves doing new things outside of their comfort zone.

The team here at St Mary's have been busy putting together a clear explanation of what we're doing over the coming weeks and months, which you can find below.

We hope that this answers most of your questions regarding what is happening at Whitkirk. If you have others then please don't hesitate to ask us. We can't promise to have the answer, but we can promise you that we are doing everything we can to continue our work and to support everyone in our congregation and beyond.

With our love and prayers,

— The Coronavirus Management Team

Keeping up to date

You can always find the latest on what we're doing at whitkirkchurch.org.uk/coronavirus. This page will provide the latest from St Mary's, as well as links to resources from elsewhere which you may find useful.

If you can't get online easily or would rather receive an update through the post, you can call us on **0113 264 5790** and ask for us to keep you informed. You can also call this number if you can't visit any of the web pages in this update, and we'll share what information we can. If you know someone else who can't get online and would benefit from this, please encourage them to give us a call.

Our services

In line with the latest recommendations from the Church of England and the Government, we have suspended all acts of public worship. While this is an unfortunate position to be in, it is the right thing to do. By no longer meeting in person, we help prevent the spread of the virus and keep our congregation and community as safe as possible.

Sunday mornings

We will be live-streaming a small service every Sunday morning at 10.00 am for as long as we are able, including readings, prayers and songs. If you or anyone else wishes to join us by watching online, all you need to do is visit whitkirkchurch.org.uk/live from your computer or smartphone. You'll be able to watch the service as it happens, as well as download the service sheet to follow along.

If you're not able to join us live for this service, then you can still watch it online at any time in the future. We encourage you to share this address with anyone who may wish to join the service.

Service sheets will be available to download each Friday. They can be used either with the live service, with the recorded service or on their own as a focus for prayer.

Prayers at Whitkirk

Our church is open for quiet contemplation and prayer for all those who seek it through the week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4.00 pm until 6.00 pm, and Saturdays from 2.00 pm until 4.00 pm.

We ask that those who walk through our doors always follow the latest advice. If you join us in one of these times, make sure you use the hand sanitizer by the entrance and maintain your distance from others who may wish to use the space.

If you are showing signs of infection, are in a high-risk group, or if someone has asked you to self-isolate, then we must ask you not to attend. If you would like us to pray for you or someone you know, or to light a votive candle on your behalf, then please let us know.

Baptisms, weddings and funerals

While we hope and pray for a return to normality and a lifting of restrictions, it is a sad fact that there will be disruption to these services for at least the next few months.

For the time being, the Church of England has asked us to postpone all baptisms until later in the year. Weddings and funerals may go ahead on the planned dates, as long as the minimum number of people attends them. For weddings, this usually means the couple, their parents and their witnesses. For funerals, this usually means immediate family only.

We will be in touch to discuss options with every person who is affected by these changes as soon as it is close enough to the date for us to be confident in what we should say. We appreciate that not knowing for sure will be frustrating but hope that you can understand why we're doing things this way.

Staying in touch

We're eager to keep in touch with everybody in our congregation and community, even though we may not be able to meet physically.

You can follow what we're doing or message us on Facebook at [/whitkirkchurch](#), or you can follow us on Twitter at [@stmaryswhitkirk](#). You can also send an email to hello@whitkirkchurch.org.uk.

If you can't get online but would still like to stay in touch with St Mary's, then please call us on **0113 264 5790**. We can arrange for regular phone calls to have a chat, as well as make sure you get weekly updates through the post.

Home communion

If you usually receive home communion, we are afraid that we cannot continue to offer this until further notice. Our usual home communion team will be in touch to provide support and offer prayers during this time.

Landmark magazine

We have delayed delivery of this month's Landmark magazine as we change what we do to meet the new circumstances. Our team will deliver future issues as usual.

Our other meetings

We have suspended all of our other meetings until further notice, including youth-focused meetings such as FISH and Messy Church, as well as our Lent study groups and prayer meetings.

Over the coming days and weeks, we will be exploring ways we can continue these groups virtually where possible.

The Community Centre

We believe that closing our Community Centre to all bookings for the immediate future is the only responsible thing to do. We'll be in touch with everybody affected by this closure to discuss the available options, and will be refunding all deposits for cancelled events.

Food bank collection point

This closure includes our usual food bank collection point. If you usually donate food, please consider instead making a financial donation. You can find more information about this at leedssoutheast.foodbank.org.uk.

How can I help?

We are grateful to the many people who have made offers to help during this time. Here's what you can do.

Stay safe and follow advice

Preventing others from getting sick by following the latest advice around avoiding physical contact and self-isolation is the most helpful thing you can do.

You can find the latest advice at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Volunteer

If you are fit, healthy and in a low-risk group you can volunteer to help at Doing Good Leeds, who are coordinating efforts across the city. Visit doinggoodleeds.org.uk for more information.

Keep donating

If you usually donate to the work of St Mary's, please keep doing so. We rely on your regular donations to keep doing our work, now more than ever.

If you usually give by envelope, please give us a call or email to discuss moving to standing order, or see whitkirkchurch.org.uk/donate for more.

Managing the Church

We have put together a Coronavirus Management Team to manage the Church during this time. This team includes the Church's usual Standing Committee and other key members. They will be responsible for making most of the day-to-day decisions around this ongoing outbreak.

The best way to share any concerns or questions with this team is to email us at hello@whitkirkchurch.org.uk.

The Bishop of Leeds has postponed the Church's Annual Parochial Church Meeting until October at the earliest. This meeting is where the Church presents its annual report, discusses the previous year and elects roles such as churchwarden and PCC members.