# Parish of ….

Dear

I'm writing to you to answer some questions about what we are doing and where we are going as a parish during this time of social isolation.

**1. What is the church doing?**

As you know our buildings are closed and we are not able to run home groups, parent and toddlers, coffee morning, Messy Church, Who let the dads out or even hold a prayer meeting. At the moment our church hall at St Paul's is still being used by the pre-school to provide care for the children of key workers.

We are all having to find other ways of caring for each other and our neighbours as well as to maintain a life of prayer and bible reading. This is made especially difficult when we can't get within 2 metres of other people. Usually our collective worship and our home groups encourage us in faith, now we are having to find ways of feeding our spirit that are more self directed. This isn't all bad, as it gives us time to focus on what really helps.

Thank God, there are lots of fantastic free resources available to help us give and receive help, and to help us grow in faith. I am trying to send out some of the best materials that I can find online, and we have made a few extra ones in the Benefice. We are trying to create talks and videos that help both you and our neighbours to make sense and find hope in this difficult time.

Personally I believe that the role of the church (that is all of us) in this current time is provide the encouragement that people need to love and support each other. Some of us are able to get out and help in practical ways; others can be devoted in prayer; some will spend hours on the phone checking up on people; others will be a place of calm amidst the storm. We all have a role, and we are all playing a vital part, even if that part involves staying at home and apparently doing very little. It is hard for us all, and we need to draw on the grace of God, however we best connect with God.

**2. What are the clergy doing?**

As your parish priest, I am working in very different ways. I am coordinating our church ministry team as we attempt to ensure that everyone has someone to phone them or shop for them. I am trying to do the same in my street, and for the clergy around the Deanery. We are trying to create a phone line for any NHS staff who need someone to talk to.

XXX is co-ordinating a group that will deliver people's prescriptions. I am in regular contact with Rob and Gill in the other parishes in the benefice. We are all working on morale building and practical help projects.

**3. What can I do to help?**

I'm sure that you have found different ways of helping people. Here are a few that I know people are finding helpful:

* Sign up to your local online community group.
* If you are under 70 and in good health you could offer to pick up prescriptions or shopping for people who can't get out.
* You can volunteer for the NHS (even if you are over 70). There are different roles needed. Follow this link: <https://www.goodsamapp.org/nhs>
* You can pray – we are setting up a whatsapp group that will pray by name for specific people, then send me a message, including your mobile phone number.
* You can phone your friends from church each day and check how they are doing. If you need someone's phone number, give me a ring. (I'll check that they are happy for me to give it out, of course).

**4. Where are we going as a parish?**

Nobody knows how long this epidemic will last and what impact it will have on the world. We pray that it will lead to a kinder, greener, safer world, but that will only be achieved by God's grace and our prayer and action towards that objective. We do know that world economies are being hit hard and many people are losing jobs or income. It will be a challenge not to fall back into austerity and despair. We will face this together. We are committed to support and care for all our church members, we have a fellowship fund to help any who are hitting hard times. We also want to be a force for good in our community as it rebuilds after the epidemic.

All this requires us to be resilient and faithful. We need to rethink how we use our time, energy, buildings and resources. We also need to ensure that we have enough income to meet our necessary expenses. As a church we have seen our regular income halve. Even after we have made the cutbacks that we can, and the savings from not heating our buildings, we are paying out about £X more per month than we have coming in. I wonder if you can help us at all? Of course, you must look after your family first, but if you have any capacity, would you consider increasing your giving by standing order or PGS for the next few months? You can change the amount you give via PGS by phoning 01452 835595 or emailing them at info@parish(givingscheme.org.uk If you need help with how to do this, please contact our treasurer. (Insert name and number)

If you give cash or through the envelope scheme, could you give by cheque for the next few months? If you wish to do so, please make cheques to “**Official PCC name”** and post them to: Treasurer, at xxxxxx

Once this epidemic passes due to the amazing work of our government, NHS and all our citizens, we will have to rebuild our lives and communities. We'll be ready to respond as a community to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. In the meantime, we can begin to dream about the kind of community that we want to create.

**5. What should I do if I need help?**

If you need medical **prescriptions** collecting, phone xxx

If you need **food shopping**, phone xxxx

If you want **someone to talk to or would like prayer**, phone xxx

If you have **run out of money**, phone Citizens Advice for **foodbank** on xxx or phone the priest (insert name) if you need other kinds of financial support.

If you are feeling really low and **need emotional support**, phone the clergy or The Samaritans on 116 123.

We pray that God will fill you with all that you need to stay live joyful, and hopeful lives to His glory.

Yours in the love of God