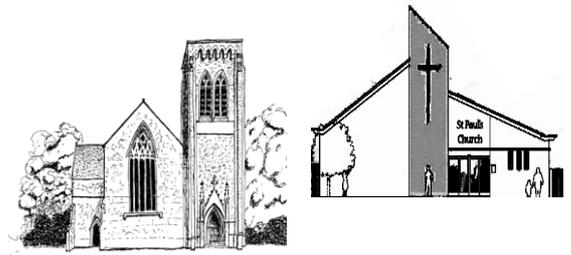




Thursday 14th May 2020



Dear Church Family,

"Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, be with us in truth and love." 2 John 1:3 How much added thrust those words have in these times!

I wanted to write to everyone for our mutual encouragement and solidarity in the body of Christ at Emmanuel and St Paul's and to thank you for your part in this ministry. To this end, over the past few weeks as a leadership, we have striven to make it possible for everyone in the congregation to be able to be in touch and to be able to meet centrally for prayer, reflection and fellowship every day.

The first has been achieved through multiple means of Royal Mail, hand delivery, phone calls, website, Facebook and 'Zoom'. Praise the Lord for modern and old fashioned and faithful means of communication alike! We currently meet as home groups, children, coffee lounges, staff meetings, PCC, prayer meetings and are also able to offer virtual Christianity Explained sessions at a time when many people are seeking online.

The second has been achieved through the daily 9.00am Facebook, 'Go Live!' Bible reflection, prayer time and fellowship together through computer, smart-phone, tablet and of course, landline telephone! (Later available as video.) The result is that all of us can be together if we wish to be!¹

As a church, through our natural friendships and networks it's wonderful to see people looking after one another over the phone, over hedges and gates and in very practical ways too.

We are also finding a new, and please God temporary, means of being church and we are taking steps to make sure we remember and consolidate the lessons we are learning.

I continue to stand amazed at, and grateful for, the ingenuity and faithfulness of so many people who, in the light of need, have come to the fore to offer their God given gifts as part of the body of Christ. These have shown themselves in catching up on building maintenance, work in our grounds, phoning round the congregations through Yellow Pages, delivering shopping, sharing joys, sorrows, support and encouragement over the phone, maintenance of administration, keeping our website up to date and sharing practical love in our neighbourhood. Last but of primary importance, those who have silently, resolutely and persistently supported the parish effort in their daily prayers.

And finally, as Rector and Chair of the PCC, may I also thank you for your continued financial support of all the ministry that is still taking place and maintaining the platform from which we will be able to conduct a more physically present ministry when this present crisis, under the Lord's hand, draws to a close. What a very great celebration that will be – when we can all join together again in one place to praise Him!

Though we have been able to do all this without buildings, we have missed the physicality of being together, but we have proved we can be church without bricks and mortar. That our work is the work of the Holy Spirit in people's lives. The work of the church continues albeit often seen only by the eyes of our Lord and those whose lives are being touched by his grace, mercy and peace through the ministry of his people, the church, at any one moment in time. Praise the Lord, Hallelu-Jah!

Every blessing in Christ, in His Grip and Grace,

¹ One or two people who give by envelope or open plate have also asked if they could do this on the website – yes you can! Go to 'Support us', 2nd page in on the Website: emmanuelplymouth.co.uk where you can assign your giving to Emmanuel or St Paul's.