A Pastoral Epistle from the Dean, 15 March 2020

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” John 4:18

As you will all know, concern about the Coronavirus/ Covid-19 outbreak is increasing globally. It is clear that the weeks ahead will be difficult for many people.

The Bishop of Reading, Olivia Graham, has offered us some thoughts on how we should react as Christians, called to walk in love and without fear. She reminds us that we should be Calm, Caring, Considerate and Christ-like – acting together and lovingly for the good of all, but particularly the most vulnerable.

At Christ Church we are deeply concerned about the well-being of our congregations and members of our community, and are constantly reviewing the situation in line with advice from the Government and the Church of England, as well as responding to the local situation. A number of measures are being taken in order to mitigate and reduce risk to our congregations (see below).

At times of anxiety, it is particularly important that we are able to bring ourselves before God for comfort, peace and blessing. This is why, as a cathedral community, we are continuing to meet together to worship God and to support one another in this holy place. However, please be sensible. If you are vulnerable, or feel worried, or if you are ill, don’t come to church. God promises to meet you in any place and at any time.

You are invited to be in touch with a member of the clergy if you would like spiritual support at this time – email philippa.white@chch.ox.ac.uk or edmund.newey@chch.ox.ac.uk.

If you are remaining at home, there are many resources for prayer and Bible study available; do ask clergy for recommendations. One useful booklet, produced by a group of churches in Wakefield, is available online.

May the blessing of God rest upon you all, bringing comfort, peace and healing.

The Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy, Dean

Measures we are taking to mitigate and reduce risk to our congregations, staff, choirs, volunteers and clergy in our Cathedral:

- Following Church of England advice
- No longer sharing the chalice at any service
- Communion will be taken standing at both stations
- No physical touch when sharing the Peace
- No holy water in the font
- Retiring collections only
- Reducing contact between choir and congregations
- Thorough cleaning and disinfection strategy
- Hand sanitiser available on the welcome desk.

If you have any further or more specific concerns, please speak to any of the clergy. However, if you are vulnerable, unwell, worried or would rather not come to church, please feel under no pressure to come.