



Padnell Road  
Cowplain, Waterlooville  
Hampshire. PO8 8DZ

02392 262295  
[www.stwilfridscowplain.co.uk](http://www.stwilfridscowplain.co.uk)

**Vicar: Rev'd Ian Snares**  
[vicar@stwilfridscowplain.co.uk](mailto:vicar@stwilfridscowplain.co.uk)

02392 251603

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Dear friends

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength...  
Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”* Mark 12.30-31

Yesterday's announcement from the Prime Minister is unprecedented in our country's history. I am sure it will come as no surprise that we have been given no choice but to close our church and halls until further notice, having already suspended all services and activities. Even weddings and funerals are affected by these new directives. We've taken these actions because of our responsibility to love our neighbours.

I'm sure that like me, you are wondering what might happen over the coming weeks and how this might affect us all. Many are no doubt concerned about the health of loved ones or indeed themselves. And being alone and feeling isolated is a real challenge for a large number in our community and church family.

Well I want to shout out loud and clear that St Wilfrid's isn't closed; it's just our building that's locked! Church is the community of those who follow Jesus – and we don't need to physically be in the same place to do so. So we can each support one another thorough this time. Loving our neighbours is loving God!

We want everyone to feel connected, and that takes each of us to play our part. Please regularly contact your friends and neighbours. These days there are many ways of doing so without being there in person; what works for you? Phone calls might seem old hat but actually are incredibly powerful. Modern technology enables us to connect in many ways. What's App, Facebook, Skype, Facetime, Zoom... please use them to look out for each other. I've already heard of a homegroup that's meeting via Zoom.

We also want to ensure that nobody falls through the net. If you or others you know are feeling isolated and would like someone to chat with or to pray with you by phone, please contact our **Pastoral Care team** on **07743 720138**. And don't forget if you have a prayer request, we would be delighted to pray for you – please call our **Prayer Chain coordinators** on **023 9225 1904** or email [josnares@gmail.com](mailto:josnares@gmail.com) or [w.barberini@btinternet.com](http://w.barberini@btinternet.com).

During this difficult time, we want to help each of us to continue and grow in our Christian faith. In our regular emails, we've highlighted some wonderful daily devotional and prayer websites and apps – please take a look. If you are online, please do read our **regular emails**, subscribe to our **Facebook page @stwilfridscowplain** and website [www.stwilfridscowplain.co.uk](http://www.stwilfridscowplain.co.uk) for latest news and information. Why not download our *Worship at Home* booklet with daily morning and night prayer you can say at home.

Sadly we've had to close our parish office but you can email [valstrutt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:valstrutt@hotmail.co.uk) or phone **07305 301398** for information about St Wilfrid's or for church-related queries. And do feel free to contact me (email and phone shown above).

I'm convinced that God is with us through this crisis. Let's together pray for God to help all doctors, nurses and all hospital and medical staff as they care for all who are sick. for guidance for our government and their advisors, and to protect the most vulnerable amongst us – the sick, the poor, those at the margins of society, those whose livelihoods are at greatest risk.

With love and prayers

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