18th March 2020
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In light of the recent outbreak of the Coronavirus we have been advised by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishop of Blackburn, that all public acts of worship must cease with immediate effect. It is important to remember that whilst there will be no social gatherings or Sunday worship the Church is alive and well and continues, albeit it in a different format. Suspension of public worship, particularly as we approach Holy Week and the joyous season of Easter is heart-breaking. We can only look forward to the time when things return to normal.

The church building at St Leonard’s will be open daily, (even if school closes), please feel free, if you are not self-isolating, to use the church for private prayer. I hope to prepare some prayer resources to leave in church for people to take home and use at their own convenience. As ever, I will be continuing with Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer where prayers will be offered for all affected by the Coronavirus, for our church family and our parish. If you have any specific prayer requests, please do pass them on to me.

Even though we are unable to meet together to worship as we might wish, that does not mean we put our friendships and care for each other and the community which we serve on hold, we just need to find different ways to look out for each other, offering pastoral support and help. This might be using technology, e mails, Twitter, Facebook, video calls, or through telephone calls and letters. There will be some who are self-isolating, especially those living alone, who would value this highly, to combat any potential loneliness. Perhaps you may be able to collect shopping or prescriptions for those in isolation or pop some prayer resources through their letterbox.

Please let me know of any spiritual or pastoral support that is needed, either for yourself or someone you may know and f you’d appreciate a phone call/e mail chat. As so many meetings and events have been cancelled my diary is practically clear. Get in touch by e mail revtswindells@aol.com, phone – 01254 247039 (leave a message if I’m out). Please do not think you are bothering me, as your vicar it is my role and privilege to support you in whatever way I can.

As you are aware, things are changing daily and the diocese are keeping us constantly updated. I will aim to keep you as fully informed as possible as things progress. If you use Facebook or Twitter, the church pages will be updated with news, links to prayer resources etc. I’ve used the contact details for those whom have given me permission. It may well be that there are regular members who don’t receive this, please do pass it on to anyone you think may have been missed and ask them to get in touch with me to be added to the list.

Finally, let us unite together in prayer, becoming the light of Jesus who shines in the darkness of these unsettled times, bringing hope and God’s love to those around us.

With love and prayers