

The Parish of Christchurch

The Priory Church of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch
St George, Jumpers • St John at Purewell



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Dear Friends

Like all of you I am sure, during the last few days I have watched television news bulletins reporting from inside several of our country's hospitals and have witnessed the truly horrific images of the impact, that the pandemic is having on so many individual human lives. It is hard to focus upon the thoughts and emotions that patients and staff alike must truly be living through. The doctors, nurses and other NHS staff are exhausted, many of their own colleagues have fallen ill, shifts are long and arduous, and there is seemingly no end in sight as more and more new patients are admitted to the wards, each requiring personal and complicated care and treatment. When we watch such images, when we see the desperation written across the face of each of these wonderful medical professionals, perhaps the reason why we are being asked to stay at home, to protect the NHS and to save lives, becomes far clearer for us all to both understand and also to comply with.

Well if that was not the opening paragraph that you had either expected or hoped to read in the first pastoral letter of this new year, then let me try and balance the image of the opening sentences with a second picture, one that shows the very best of human nature from a different but related aspect of life within the wards of our local and national hospitals at this time. For amid the endless rounds of new admissions, of emergency and life changing decisions, with the bleeps and the sirens of the medical equipment constantly sounding and with the exhaustion of all involved visible in each square inch of these wards, my attention was drawn most powerfully to a different image of care being offered - this time a form of love for which no specific training can ever really be given. And it came in the form of a nurse simply taking the hand of her patient, and through the protective gloves covering her own hands, she simply and very gently stroked her patient's hand.

As we give thanks for the advances in medical treatments and at the same time take a degree of comfort from the fact that the roll out of the vaccination process is speeding up, let us also this week and this new year, stop to think of the gifts of love and care that we can offer to other people and how as Christians, this should be central to our faith journeys as we seek to do the will of Christ, and to be his very hands and feet in a world of just such need today. We are not allowed to come within two metres of other people from outside of our household, so we are not able to tenderly show such love with the most basic of signs by holding someone's hand or by giving them a hug, and this is something that I find particularly hard to abide by, with every instinct within me telling me to do just this as I meet those who are in need of this very thing. So we have to adapt and show such love in other ways, perhaps not as good or effective but nevertheless which are still rooted in the love that we have for our neighbour and as such, is from God and for God.

I hope that these heart-felt letters that Charles, Jonathan and I have written over the last nine or so months have helped each one of you and have touched you in this very way. They will of course continue to be written until the need for them ceases. Phone calls, emails and yes even letters continue to be written and we have surely all benefited from all of these pastoral contacts during the last year. Sometimes

it is the simple acts of kindness that mean the very most. I feel sure that the beneficiaries of such personal and heart-felt care in our hospitals at this time would say exactly the same.

With my love and my prayers.

Richard.

COVID Vaccination Scam Alert (From the Diocese of Winchester.)

There have been reports of a new scam where a person receives a text saying they need to book a vaccination appointment and it takes them to a fake NHS form which then asks for their bank details to prove their identity.

The NHS will never ask for a person's banking information so please do not provide as it will be a scam

There is a texting scam leaflet you can download here: https://cfa.nhs.uk/resources/downloads/fraud-awareness/covid-19/COVID-19_SMS_and_Text_Message_Scams.pdf

The scam has been reported in the media here: <https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/science-technology/1378158/NHS-Covid-19-Vaccination-Vaccine-Appointment-Pfizer-BioNTech-Text-Scam-How-To-Avoid>

And a Similar warning from the Dorset Police

We are aware that some people are receiving fraudulent calls and text messages offering the COVID-19 vaccination. In some cases, people are asked to press a number on their keypad or to send a text message to confirm they wish to receive the vaccine. Doing so is likely to result in a charge being applied to their phone bill. In other cases, callers are offering the vaccine for a fee or asking for bank details. People are warned to be alert to these scams. The vaccine is only available from the NHS and the NHS will contact you when it is your turn. At present, appointments are only being offered to members of the public over 80 years old. The NHS will: NEVER ask you to press a button on your keypad or send a text asking you to confirm you want the vaccine. NEVER ask for payment for the vaccine or for your bank details. If you receive a call you believe to be fraudulent, hang up. If you believe you have been the victim of fraud or identity theft you should report this directly to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. Where the victim is vulnerable, report it to the police online or by calling 101.