

A prayer to pray with children

God of love and hope,
you made the world and care for all creation,
but the world feels strange right now.
The news is full of stories about coronavirus.
Some people are worried that they might get ill.
Others are anxious for their family and friends.
Be with them and help them to find peace.
We pray for the doctors and nurses and scientists,
and all who are working to discover the right medicines
to help those who are ill.
Thank you that even in these anxious times,
you are with us.
Help us to put our trust in you and keep us safe. Amen.

If you are able to offer help in the community, there is a community help hub where you can register your ability to assist
<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub>

CHURCH CONTACTS

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The Parish of Hempsted with St Mary de Lode
and St Mary de Crypt, Gloucester
in partnership with Gloucester Cathedral



*'The Lord is my light, my light and salvation,
in God I trust, in God I trust.'*

Psalm 27

The way in which we live our lives has changed dramatically. All of us are instructed to stay at home unless we are key workers. Outside exercise is permitted once a day, yet the most vulnerable in our community have to remain indoors for 12 weeks. I know that many feel isolated, worried and afraid. To be honest, probably all of us are anxious because we have no idea what the future holds. There is a sundial above the door to St Swithun's Church and I have been reflecting on the words which are above it - *Tempus Fugit*. At the moment, it doesn't feel that time is flying by. But this time *will* pass. All of our churches and the Cathedral are now closed. Yet they remain beacons of hope in our community, buildings that have witnessed to God in Christ across the centuries in good times and in bad. The priest Mark Oakley reminds us that 'Hope is the soul's strong but deep down, unseen, anchor'. Buildings may be closed, but the church is still open because people are the church. As we pray in our homes, as we reach out to one another in practical ways, as we support our key workers, let us remain people of hope, people of care and people of prayer. Do email your prayer requests to prayer.requests@swithunandmary.org.uk or phone them through to me if you prefer. Love and prayers, Nikki



Our prayers are asked for all affected by the virus and their families, for the healthcare professionals working tirelessly to protect our communities and for all who are searching for a cure. If you are able, we continue to pause at 12noon to say The Lord's Prayer uniting us across the Parish.

A prayer in lockdown

Ever present God,
be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
Be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness,
be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost
inhabit our communities
and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.
For Jesus' sake. Amen.



A prayer for our children and young people no longer at school

Loving God
we pray for those students
grieving goodbyes and celebrations.
Hold them and comfort them.
Give them direction and lead them gently,
into whatever the future may hold.
This we pray through Jesus Christ, Amen.

'On Your Patch'

These strange times are affecting all of us, even your parish administrator! Nikki and I are keeping in touch by telephone and conducting all our business by email. In between all of that, like you, I'm trying to find a new routine. At the moment, you're more likely to see me in the garden covered in mud! I say garden, but in reality, it's a patch of unloved communal ground between blocks of flats on the estate where I live. A year ago, I decided I couldn't live with the weeds any longer and started to tidy it up. After a winter of rain and gloom, the last few days of sunshine and enforced isolation have got me back outside with my new garden fork - the ivy destroyed the last one! The end is in sight, the couch grass and the ivy have nearly all been dug out, a challenge when the ground is heavy with clay and moisture, and builders' rubble. They say the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the bulbs I planted last autumn are coming up and brightening my days, as is the green fuzz on the trees outside my bedroom window, a sign that spring really is finally here. God's beautiful creation reminds me that life continues, and the world keeps turning. It also makes me want to make my own creations, whether that's knitting for a friend's baby, making a sympathy card for someone who's been recently bereaved or quilting a wall-hanging of the Lord's Prayer. Social distancing is challenging, but it gives me an opportunity to use the gifts God gave me, and to appreciate His world even more. If you're:

- a knitter in search of inspiration you may like www.ravelry.com
- a paper crafter or multi-media artist in search of a community you may like barbaragrayblog.com and claritymattersblog.com
- a gardener seeking 'jobs to do right now' the RHS has good advice: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/march>

What's happening 'On your patch'? We'd love to publish your stories, so send them to admin@swithunandmary.org.uk and we'll collate and share them over the coming weeks. *Claire*