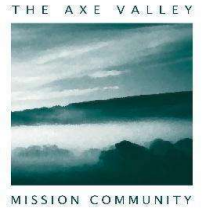


*I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.*

*Ephesians 1 : 16*

**From the Rector**



How much can change in a short while ! Suddenly in just a few short weeks the world is fighting for its life – in so many ways. May I **thank you** for the fantastic response from so many in our churches and community to the changing situation and circumstances in which we find ourselves. In so many ways we have already seen the spirit of faith, service and fellowship alive in our town and villages.

We have now been in ‘lockdown’ for a week – though in some ways it feels much longer. I am so impressed with the way that so many have risen to the challenges of what for most of us is a new way of life. The response from ‘ACER’ (Axminster Community Emergency Response) has been superb. People have come together to offer a single emergency number in Axminster (01297 35550) from which people can be directed to, the best help available. So many have offered their services and practical support has been provided many times over.

We have openings to care for our neighbours, to build community, to offer prayer and share faith. Let’s offer to do those things which we safely can, to help each other – eg volunteer where appropriate and support those who are doing so much for others ; contacting those who are isolated ; being generous wherever we can.

We are all aware of many ‘hidden’ examples of what might be called ‘old fashioned neighbourliness’. Telephone calls to those who don’t have computer access or confidence are something most of us can do, whatever our state of health or need for self-isolation. A 10 minute call to someone you may not even know very well, can cheer them up and help to ease concerns and worries, and leave them feeling part of the wonderful community here. We all need to feel we can play our part and that it is valuable –we can do this through the telephone.

I don’t think all our churches have ever been closed before in the hundreds of years of their history. These places of spiritual welcome are now closed – but actually a church is its people, not its stones and windows. Again, it is wonderful to see the way people are adapting to the situation and sharing in faith and worship in new ways. There are broadcast services on radio, TV, and live on Facebook from Exeter Cathedral each Sunday, and we have our own telephone service for 20 minutes or so each Friday at 10.30am. – **Call 0330 606 0403 and give the access code 484444**

Next week is Holy Week in the run up to Easter. We won't be able to have all the usual events and celebrations together but we will have lots of things happening. Watch this space for details of our plans for the week. Many of us have discovered Zoom and are using it for video calls and group chats so we will certainly have opportunities to share in virtual services and fellowship next week.

Let's keep following the advice of our leaders and professional NHS staff and keep ourselves and others as safe as possible.

With thoughts and prayers

Clive Sedgewick (Rector)

*We must become bigger than we have been: more courageous, greater in spirit, larger in outlook. We must become members of a new race, overcoming petty prejudice, owing our ultimate allegiance not to nations but to our fellow men within the human community.*

*Haile Selassie*