

Dear Church family,

*Be my rock of refuge,
to which I can always go;
give the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.*

Psalm 71 v3

I wonder what your confession is at this time? I'm not really thinking about unwholesome patterns of behaviour or impure thoughts but more what you feel guilty about. Perhaps you are overwhelmed by the scale of the pandemic and are beginning to be a bit numb to it all. Or maybe your life has been impacted little compared to others and you feel blessed by our beautiful surrounding and you feel guilty about that. Maybe you are furloughed and feel guilty for not working when others are still working under extreme pressure and stress in dangerous conditions. Or perhaps you are working and have adapted to working from home but finding it so difficult to concentrate and focus and feel guilty about being unproductive. We shouldn't underestimate the way this has affected all of us. This invisible virus, like anything evil, loves to rob us not just of our health but also our wellbeing and our peace. So, I encourage you to be real about the way it is affecting you (you can't hide it from God anyway) and to have grace for yourself as well as for others. Keep remembering and lifting each other in prayer daily. As the psalm says he is *always* the rock of refuge to which we can go. As you pray please remember the family of Pam Elvidge (who so many of you will remember from the 9 o'clock congregation at St John's) who has sadly died yesterday, This is a very difficult time to lose someone.

I am so delighted that so many of you are being able to join St John's church online each Sunday morning and the evident pleasure of being together and 'seeing' each other. However, I am aware that for some the technology is difficult and so I attach a transcript of Sam's sermon from last Sunday if you are one of those people. Do let me know if there are others who might like to receive written versions of our sermons or calls from church members. We will continue with our 2nd week in our series on the psalms from this Sunday including our weekday FB 'lives' and if you find God prompting you to respond to what you hear creatively (however old or young you are) please do share it with me – I would love to see or hear it.

You might remember before the pandemic started that we were due to host a Deanery Mission in May and there was lots of energy and good ideas both here at St John's and around the Deanery for ways to reach out with the good news of the gospel to our neighbours. You may find that the things you are doing as good neighbours within social isolation rules, or in your phone conversations with family and friends that some questions

The Parish of St John's Hartley Wintney

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are coming up about faith for you or them. With a bit more time on your hands this might be a good time explore these questions and your faith in dialogue with others.

With this in mind we are going online with Alpha from Monday 27th April offering both evening and daytime sessions on Zoom. This enables everyone to meet up and watch a film together and then break into small groups for discussion. Sadly because it is online a meal can't be shared but it does mean that people can join from anywhere if they have Wi-Fi and a tablet, laptop, pc or smart phone.

So if you have a neighbour or friend or you yourself would like to try Alpha, even if you have done it before and whatever your situation, this is a great opportunity to explore more deeply the essence of the Christian faith and the difference a living faith can make to your life.

More details, including a video, can be found on st John's website <https://stjohnshw.org.uk/alpha> and there's a link to an email address to say that you are interested. A taster session is on Monday 27th April at 7.30.

The economic consequence of the coronavirus means that many families are finding it difficult to manage. There are 2 practical things we can do to help as a church:

Firstly, please keep donating to the Food Bank. At the moment they would appreciate donations of Tinned Meat, Tinned Fruit, Rice Pudding, Custard, Sponge Puddings, Shampoo, Shower Gel and Soap.

Secondly, many more people will be needing help to manage their finances, especially budgeting on a low, or no, income and issues with debt. Junction 5 is a St John's mission partner and is looking for more people to be trained to help others in this way as they anticipate a surge in demand. If you think you might be able to be volunteer to do this please do call David Wright on 07787 511806 to find out more.

Until we gather together again on Sunday I pray that you will keep safely close to God and know that he is the place you can always go.

With love

Angie

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