



PARISHES BY THE WALL

Living faith on the frontier

The Vicarage, Station Yard, Haydon Bridge, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 6LL
t: 01434 688196 m:07985 412542 e: revbenjamin carter@gmail.com

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Dear Friend

Through these months of pandemic, we have been living with the challenges of meeting our twin calling to love God in worship and love our neighbour through the patterns of physical distancing with which we have been living.

The Government's regulations for the current lockdown stress that, particularly in the face of the unknown perils of the new variant of the virus, we should seek to stay at home except for certain allowed activities. One of those is to attend places of worship. Given the uncertainty of this time, and to keep one another safe as the vaccination programme begins to be rolled out for those most vulnerable, both Parochial Church Councils in the Benefice have resolved that, for the present time, we will suspend public worship. These resolutions run formally until the middle of February when we hope and pray that the public health position will be markedly better. In addition, both PCCs have agreed to meet regularly to review this position to allow us to return to forms of public worship before this date if the local situation alters in the coming weeks.

At the heart of our decision is a desire to respond, as well as we can, to the anxieties and hopes of our community. As we do this, we are doing the following to ensure that we remain a praying presence in the heart of our communities.

- St Cuthbert's Haydon Bridge will be open for those who wish to use it for private prayer on Sunday mornings from 10.30am and on Wednesday afternoons from 2pm. You are very welcome to use the church for private prayer at these times and will be asked to follow our public health guidance if you do so.
- We continue to offer prayers for our community at 9am and 6pm each day on our Facebook page.
- We are looking to develop our "at home" worship offering, particularly making our regular Sunday 9am service more accessible to those who are not able or happy to use our current format on Facebook.
- Those who have gathered as members of our Community of Prayer will be looking to develop practical means through which the prayers of the whole community can be gathered and offered through this time.

I am writing this letter at the beginning of the season of Epiphany when, following the light of the star, the wisemen came to worship the infant Jesus. This past year has been a long and arduous journey for us all and, like the wisemen, we need to remain with our eyes fixed on the light that shines into the darkness of this time. Knowing that as we do so we will be guided to the hope and new life God offers us in Jesus Christ,

This comes with my best wishes and ongoing prayers,

Benjamin