

June 2020,

Dear Dioc IMCs,

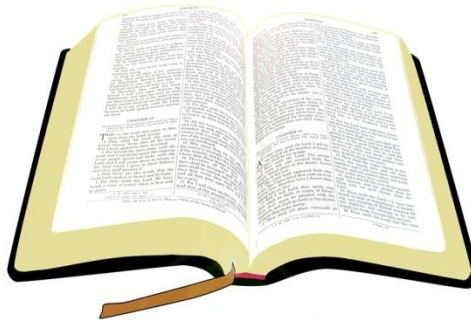
*It is hard to believe that we are still in lockdown. Many of our friends and neighbours are still self isolating and feeling a little bit anxious about going outside now that some restrictions have been eased. Modern technology has become a very important part of our everyday living although not everyone has access to the internet. A friendly phone call is much appreciated by those who can't keep in touch using social media. I regularly phone a number of people who live alone and enjoy a chat. Why not phone someone who would like some prayers or verses of scripture read to them?*

We have all had to adapt to various changes in the last few weeks - to our routine, unable to meet friends and relatives, missing church and its activities. Churches, community groups and good neighbours have developed ways of reaching people confined to their homes to make sure that they are coping with the present restrictions. Our health and well being have been emphasised in the media when the importance of daily exercise and healthy eating has been encouraged.

Much practical help is available as well as resources from voluntary and statutory services. The Public Health Agency in N I have produced a comprehensive booklet providing advice for people who have experienced a bereavement during the COVID 19 pandemic period. Two other useful booklets are also available - one dealing with practicalities and the other a children's story helping children deal with the death of a loved one. These excellent resources can be downloaded at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/covid-19-bereavement> Valuable and practical support can be found on the HSE website: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/bereavement-and-grief-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic.html>.

We read in Philippians 4: 6 - 'Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'

1 Peter 5: 7 we are told to 'Cast all your care anxiety on him because he cares for you.'



The Psalms have always been a great source of comfort to people particularly when they are anxious and worried. The following verses from the Psalms come to mind.

*Psalm 46: 1-3 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

*Psalm 27: 1 The Lord is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?*

*Psalm 55:24 Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.*

During the last few weeks, I have looked at various websites to source suitable prayers and readings to pass on to you. I found the following prayers on the Church of England website which I hope you will find helpful.

For comfort:

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low, that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

For those who are unwell or isolated:

*God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light, through him who suffered alone on the cross, but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

For hospital staff and medical researchers:

*Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your spirit, that through their work many will be restored to health; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen*

Many of you knitted the hearts from the pattern included in the last letter I sent. These can be given to people who live alone or those in care homes as well as to those suffering from Coronavirus.

You may like to knit these squares from the pattern attached. I have also included the prayer on a template for you although you may wish to write a prayer of your own. I gave the pattern to a neighbour last week who knit one each for the people in her parish who are receiving cooked meals weekly. Those receiving them were very touched.

*We all look forward to a time when we can return to a more normal way of living than we are encountering now but we still have to wait until the conditions are right.*

*I greatly appreciate the work you do in your dioceses including passing on the information in letters such as these and hope that the contents are of benefit to not just Indoor Members but others in your dioceses.*

*The phrase we often hear 'Take care and keep safe' completes this letter,*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Norma*

*(All Ireland Indoor Member Contact)*

*'God regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.'*

