Where is the Church?

Our buildings are locked. Bells are silent. Lights are switched off. It is no longer a place for people to gather or a place of prayer. It is a strange and unusual time. A question is being asked, ‘Where is the church?’. During this time of global crisis, at a time when people need a focal point of hope, it seems that the church has closed its doors.

In the early centuries of the church, there were three major plagues (A.D 165, 250 and 312) that swept through the known world. The efficient transport system introduced by the Romans, those that made trade and travel possible became the means of the virus’s transmission. During those crises the Christians stepped up. Others noticed those Christians’ fearlessness as they cared for others. Bishops encouraged the church to ‘love our enemies as well…the good should be done to all, not merely to the household of faith.’ When to be a Christian was punishable by death, they risked the authorities and exposure to the disease in order to tend to the sick and the dying. During the fiercest anti-Christian persecution, the Church provided the only care available in the cities. The care established during times of crisis and persecution led the development of hospitals, the development of our health care systems founded within the simple acts of kindness from those early Christians.

Where is our church? What are we doing as Christians? These are important questions.

The buildings, rituals and rotas stripped away, not only is the church now outward looking, it is back within the community. As Christians where our allegiance to any particular denomination is no longer important, we are the church with and for our communities. We can love God and love one another and not worry about guttering, roofs or coffee rotas. Foodbanks, food deliveries, phoning of neighbours, collecting prescriptions are part of the church’s response, working together and alongside others in loving our neighbours. Technology enabling our church to be present where people are, in their homes, available to everyone.

Our buildings maybe locked but as one church we are very much alive. Those bells will ring again. Lights will be switched on. Those buildings will once again become a place to gather and a place of prayer.

*Rev’d Richard Wallis is a Curate serving the Eight Saints Cluster of Churches which includes Carharrack, Chacewater, Devoran, Feock, Gwennap, Perran-ar-Worthal, St Day and Stithians. More information (including the times of those services) can be found at* [*www.eightsaints.org.uk*](http://www.eightsaints.org.uk) *or follow us on facebook @EightSaints.*