

3 July 2020

*An Update on Our Churches and Worship*

As you may know, the Government has recently announced that places of worship can now re-open for Corporate Worship, Individual Prayer, and for Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals. This easing of the lockdown rules is at the discretion of each local PCC and remains subject to the requirement for social distancing, rigorous hygiene, limited numbers at Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals, and does not apply to any who remain in high risk categories or are shielding.

The decision as to how, when and whether to re-open our churches has been discussed by the PCC most recently at a meeting last Thursday. Although a wide variety of opinions were expressed, there was a significant majority consensus that we should seek to re-open our churches for Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals, but not yet for Corporate Worship or Individual Prayer.

A significant consideration which informed this decision relates to those over 70 who are automatically classed as vulnerable. Current Diocesan guidance will not allow them to volunteer for the many tasks required to enable us to re-open safely.

There remain many other practical points which need to be worked through before we can progress with re-opening; cleaning (pre- and post-services), installation of sanitisation stations, use of microphones by the public, opening of toilet facilities or not, etc. As a pre-requisite for any activity in our churches, a mandatory risk assessment for each church must be carried out, and some of the detailed thinking from this will inform our next steps.

It has to be said that the decision not to open our churches for Corporate Worship and Individual Prayer was made with a somewhat heavy heart, as we know how often over the years our buildings have provided great comfort to many, not least those who would not deem themselves to be church goers. However, we take great encouragement from the attendance at our Online Services and the feedback from those who find it increasingly difficult to attend in person. As Rector and Churchwardens, we feel that we need to prioritise our worship together at 1030 online and that this should remain our central focus in our worship for now.

The PCC has therefore petitioned the Bishop for permission to suspend Sunday Services until September 13th. We will review this decision in late August, after the holiday period, and will update you following this. If you would like to know more about these decisions, please speak to Toby, Jeremy or Kayleigh.

Your safety remains our priority: wherever you are, you are a treasured member of our community and loved by God.

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