

St. Mary the Virgin, Church Lane, Prestwich, Manchester. M25

Dear friends in Christ,

We hope that you are all well and coping with these challenging and everchanging times.

You will be aware that the government has announced that our church buildings can be opened for public worship from 6 December 2020 as long as this can be done in a 'CoVid 19 Secure' way. The Church of England have now provided very detailed information and advice to support parishes as public worship recommences. The key points are:

- An advisory 'cap' of 30 has been set for weddings and other 'stand-alone' services such as baptism and confirmation if not conducted during 'routine communal worship'.
- There is no numerical 'cap' on other services, but social distancing and Public Health requirements must be met **(please note this means that, at St Mary's, numbers will be limited to 50/ 27 pods for now).**
- The two-metre 'rule' applies for public worship except in situations where closer contact cannot be avoided; extra Public Health precautions must then be taken.
- Consideration should be given to keeping numbers below the maximum possible to further minimise risk.
- Wearing of face-coverings is voluntary.
- Those at extra risk and the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' should be advised of the risks of attending public worship but a *decision* to do so is theirs alone.
- Government guidance includes a request for names of attendees to be recorded and kept for 21 days to assist 'track and trace' if required (further details from the government are expected to help).
- Singing is not recommended but a further update is awaited soon.
- Services of Holy Communion can be held subject to following specific guidance, including the continued suspension of the Common Cup (more details are set out below).

Now that the CofE has issued its guidance, Canon Law comes into play and we are obliged to re-open for public worship as soon as it is safe to do so. Following completion of a full risk assessment and in discussion between the clergy, the church wardens and the PCC, we are delighted to announce that **we will be opening for public worship at St. Mary's Church starting on Sunday, 6 December 2020**. This will give us time to put in place measures to try to ensure that the church building is as safe as it can be before people re-enter.

There will be two public act of worship only each week which will take place at 8-00am BCP & 10:30am CW on Sunday mornings. (This limitation is necessary due to the requirement to clean each place of worship after each service and/or to leave the building empty for a period of 72-hours after use so that any virus that could be present can die off).

We will continue to open for individual private prayer on Wednesdays 12 noon till 1-00pm

It is really good to be able to return to church to worship God and to pray together once again, but we all need to be aware of our own safety and that of others by doing all we can to minimise the risk of spread of the virus. We outline below the measures that will be implemented to enable us to re-open. These follow Government and Church of England advice and which we would ask you to respect these rules so that we can all keep safe:

- Please take care to protect yourself and others.
- Please come in only if it is safe to do so.
- If you feel unwell in any way or exhibit any signs of the Coronavirus at all, you should self-isolate by returning and staying at home with immediate effect.
- Please use the sanitisers provided at the entrance to the Church both as you enter *and* as you leave the building.
- Please use the tissues and bins provided in the entrance and exit areas.
- Please maintain social distancing as indicated at all times.
- You will be shown to a seat to identified by a sign showing a **Tick** to ensure at least a two-metre gap between yourself and any other person. (Members of the same household may sit together but respecting social distancing from other families or individuals).
- When you leave, please turn over the sign to show a **Cross** so that this place has been occupied and can be cleaned afterwards.
- Please follow the one-way system around church as indicated by the arrows on the floor.
- The narrowest areas in church are the aisles so please take care to ensure that safe distancing takes place, waiting for someone to come in or go out.
- Please avoid physical contact of any kind (*we will not be offering handshakes at this time*).
- The toilets will only be accessible for emergencies as they will have to be cleaned after each person has been in and safe distancing must be assured at all times.

- The prickett stand may be used to light a candle and pray for those you love or in need. Please light a tea light from the Paschal candle and place the light on the stand avoiding touching any other areas as far as possible.
- Collection plates will not be handed round but they will be available at the back of church to leave your offering. *(For those who have continued to save your offerings and/or to fill your 'giving scheme' envelopes, these will be gratefully received).*
- Please note under Government and Church of England guidelines, we are unable to offer refreshments at this time.
- Finally, for 'Track and Trace' purposes, we need to keep a register of those who have been in church. Someone will be taking these details either as you arrive or before you leave. Your details will of course be kept confidentially in accordance with GDPR legislation and will be destroyed when no longer required.

At last, we will be able to come together to receive the body of Christ as the body of Christ. However, the service will look and feel different to before in the following ways:

- Please try to arrive in good time before the service starts so that you can be shown to your seats.
- Service books, bibles, etc, may not be shared. Printed service sheets will therefore be provided for use during the service but please either dispose of these on your way out of the building using one of the waste bins available or take them home with you. *(The service has been designed to be used each week so, from an environmentally friendly point of view, it might be good if you could take it away and bring it back with you for the next service to avoid the need for repeated printing. Thank you).*
- Singing is not permitted at this time. There will be no hymns but appropriate organ music and the choir will accompany the service at relevant times.
- You are encouraged to remain seated for most of the service.
- Children are welcome to attend but they must remain with and be supervised by their parents/carers at all times to ensure social distancing from other households. *(Please note - the tower room will not be available at this time and we are unable to provide toys or other materials for the children, but the liturgy will be shorter than usual. If necessary, parents/carers are encouraged to bring something to keep their own children occupied).*

- The Eucharist will be celebrated subject to the following changes:
 - You are encouraged to say the Responses confidently although the raising of voices is discouraged to prevent any risk of droplets spreading
 - The Sharing of the Peace will take place with 'distanced' gestures rather than touch
- Holy Communion will be distributed as follows:
 - This is permitted to be in one kind only
 - The distribution will take place in silence. (Directions will be announced. Please follow the stewards' guidance).
 - Please sanitise your hands before receiving the bread. *(If you are able, please bring your own hand sanitiser with you for use during the service, although larger dispensers will be available at the entrance and exit doors).*
 - To avoid physical contact, the bread which will be dropped gently into your hand. (If contact is inadvertently made, both you and the person administering the bread must cleanse their hands immediately).
- Individual blessings will be given silently and without the laying on of hands

We are sorry if this seems very prescriptive, but it is important that we all keep safe and prevent the transmission of COVID 19. The important thing is your safety and the safety of others. It is also important in terms of our insurance policy.

Due to the social distancing guidelines, numbers will sadly have to be limited (see above). If you intend to come along, and so that we have some idea of anticipated numbers, it would be really helpful, if you could email Susie at:

- susiemapedoram@googlemail.com

We are looking forward to welcoming you back to St Mary's to give thanks and praise to God our Father who gives us strength in all things.

In the meantime, please pray for those who are preparing the building, for those preparing our worship, for those who will return and for those who feel unable to do so at this time.

Every blessing,

Fr. Shaun, Revd Carole, Rev Adele, Stewart and Susie