

Dear Friends

I do hope this letter finds you all safe and well and coping with this difficult situation.

As you all know the Government is now allowing churches to open for services. This is really good news. However, bishop Robert urges caution and taking small steps - *If you are responsible for more than one church building, you may decide to open one or more for worship, some only for private prayer and/or weddings and funerals, but not the rest – at least not for the time being.*

There has been so much guidance published by both the Government and Church of England, after the initial announcement that we could open for services it was a further week before detailed guidance was published by the Government, which then had to be considered by the Church of England and sent out to clergy accordingly. This advice was published on 1<sup>st</sup> July. There has since (on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July) been a briefing for all clergy by the Archdeacons which lasted an hour and a half. We feel that we are now in a place whereby we can actually plan to open safely. The safety of our parishioners and also the clergy is our priority and this responsibility is being taken very seriously.

The first thing to be done, together with a thorough clean, is a detailed risk assessment, which has to be undertaken and published on our website and is extremely important. This must be done for every church and it is with our Church Wardens who will action it. We have to take into consideration how many we can safely accommodate in each church for services and clear notices, hand sanitiser and other safety measures must be in place ready for restarting services. We have, of course, already had three churches open for private prayer. Please note that if we cannot leave 72 hours between people entering the church then a thorough clean must be undertaken. If we can leave 72 hours then this negates the need to do a thorough clean but all surfaces which are touched often ie door handles, must be cleaned with the appropriate sanitising materials.

Our first service will take place on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 10.30am in St Peter's Church. We shall be using St Peter's as we have a projector and screen to use as we cannot distribute or share books and papers. The first service will be non eucharistic, which I know will be a disappointment to many. However, I feel that it is important to simply go back to church initially and be together. It will be and feel very different. It will give the opportunity to worship together and experience the building and restrictions for the first time. I can also take the time to explain how different the Eucharistic service will be within the new guidelines so that it is not too overwhelming, and you know what to expect. Redemptorist will not be publishing readings sheets until at least September so,

if you would like to bring your own bible you may, although the readings will be put up on the screen.

Our first Eucharistic service will be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> July, also at St Peter's and will be done using the projector and screen. There can be no singing, no sharing of the peace, everyone will be seated at a distance of 2 metres, there will be a 'one way' system in place, everyone will have to wash or sanitise their hands on entry and exit and also before receiving communion (bread/ wafer only) and everyone must leave in silence at the end of the service.

Care will be taken when considering how we open up the other churches for services. Those taking services will not move between churches and will therefore preside at only one church on a Sunday for the time being. This is to prevent any instance of cross contamination and to protect both the congregations and clergy / readers.

Those over 70 and who are shielding are still advised to stay at home so it will be your choice and risk whether or not to attend a service. Names and contact details should be taken at each service to comply with the Government's 'track and trace' system, these will be kept for 21 days and then be destroyed.

So to recap – we will be opening for services from Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July and for the first two weeks there will be one service each Sunday, both at St Peter's before we will be looking at opening our other churches. A rota and pattern of opening is being drawn up and will be published as soon as each service is staffed. This pattern of opening will stay for August and September and then we will review. We are taking a gentle and gradual stand so that the safety of all is taken into consideration. Wednesday services will resume in September.

I do hope that this information is clear and you understand the caution we are taking to return to 'normal' worship. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to seeing you all again in church very soon.

With every blessing

*Annie*

Annie

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