

Dear all



After many meetings with the wider ministry team, the churchwardens and the PCCs of all of our six churches, we are pleased to now be able to tell you about how we will be reopening our churches for public worship. To achieve this has taken a lot of very detailed and complex risk assessments and putting in place the necessary arrangements, facilities and signage to make each of our six church buildings Covid-19 compliant – in other words, making them as safe as is possible for you to enter for worship once again.

A gradual phased opening of our churches will take place during August. It won't be the case that every church will open on the same Sunday and because of all the requirements and precautions that need to be in place – which are same for every church and place of worship across the country – and there will also be some **temporary changes to the timings** of some of our services, and the services themselves will be different.

For Covid-19 related reasons and the availability of clergy, **it will not be possible to provide all the services that were available pre-lockdown.**

The **enclosed service plan** has been agreed by the ministry team, churchwardens and PCCs across our six churches. The plan is intended as a **temporary measure while pandemic restrictions continue. This may change but different patterns are likely to be in place for several months.** We will be reviewing the new service plan towards the end of the September.

#### **What might coming back to Church be like?**

Coming back to church will be different to what it was pre-lockdown. Some of what is shown below may be difficult to read but we hope that it will be helpful to you in understanding both the preparations that are taking place and also to be able to visualise what it's going to be like coming back.

We have also produced a **short film** which is available on our website at [www.haldonteam.org.uk](http://www.haldonteam.org.uk)

The following is based on national Government & Church of England guidance. It is accurate as at Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July. **The guidance may change.**

- If you are unwell, shielding or experiencing any symptoms related to Covid-19 then in order to protect others, please do not come to church.
- The national guidance strongly advises everyone to wear a face covering when inside the church. Wearing a face covering is for the benefit of other people as well as ourselves.
- Social distancing in our churches will be 2 metres. In some churches there will also be a one-way system.
- You will be asked to sanitize your hands on entry and for the purposes of track and trace, you will be asked to give your name and contact details on every Sunday that you come – this record will be kept for 21 days and then destroyed.
- There will be no hymn books or service booklets: a service sheet will already be on a seat for you. To avoid the possibility of contamination, please take that home with you after the service.
- Someone will show you where you can sit. If you come to church with someone in your own household you will be able to sit with them.
- The service will be shorter than normal. The organ may well play and we may also use music on CDs but there's no singing and please say the responses quietly. In communion services, we won't be physically sharing the Peace but you may like to look across at others when invited to do so.
- There won't be a collection during the service so please leave your donations on the plate as you enter or leave – or make a donation online.

- At the end of the service, after the final prayer or when the minister has said 'Go in peace to love and serve Lord' – everyone will be asked to leave in a socially distanced manner.
- At the moment, there will be no refreshments after the service and please do not congregate inside the church but leave by the appropriate and signed exit.
- Please sanitise your hands as you leave. Toilets will be open and they will be regularly cleaned.
- We appreciate you may like to talk to others so please do so outside, keep pathways clear and maintain social distancing.

### **Receiving Communion**

Not all our services across the team include communion but when they do the priest will be the only one who handles the elements and vessels being used and they will be taking several additional precautions as they say the eucharistic prayer. You will be shown when to go forward – please maintain social distancing with the person in front of you. You will need to sanitise your hands before and after you remove and replace your face covering. You will be asked to remain standing to receive communion and you will be able to receive in one kind only: that is the consecrated host – the wafer. This is still full communion. If you think you will have difficulty standing for a long time please let one of the sidespeople know and the priest will bring communion to you in your seat. The priest will drop the wafer on to your hands – in other words, they will not place it in your hand nor will they place it in your mouth. The invitation to communion will already have been made so the priest will not say anything and please do not respond. After you've received, please sanitise your hands and replace your face covering; please also maintain social distancing as you return to your seat, following a one way system if one is in place.

**Online services will continue** as pre-recorded for the time-being – they also require considerable time, preparation and commitment from clergy and others during weekdays so that is also a contributing factor to the enclosed service plan. As elsewhere in the country, we have people joining online who are not normally church attenders or who are house bound.

We are also committed to supporting and providing resources (e.g. monthly mailing) to those not on the internet and for those who decide not to return to church at the moment.

### **Welcome back**

Coming back to church won't be the same for a while but we do hope that you will feel able to come back. But we also understand if the prospect of doing so is worrying or it's not something you want to do at the moment. As well as being physically together again, we will be continuing the online services for the foreseeable future to gather together spiritually. And you can find material to use for your own prayer and worship on our website and by contacting us for printed copies.

Even though that is a very special place, the church is not the building and, of course, it is good to share our faith, our prayer, our worship and yes, cups of coffee afterwards. But at the moment we can't do that in the same way we used to. The church is ultimately the people – the ones who God loves and the ones who put their trust and faith in the God who loves us. We live with a God who loves us and brings hope for our lives.

Thank you for your prayers, patience and cooperation.

**Revd Jane Frost**  
Team Vicar

**Revd Sue Astbury**  
Associate Priest

**PS** If you are not receiving the weekly e-mail newsletter and would like to do so, please send an email to [haldonteam@gmail.com](mailto:haldonteam@gmail.com)