

UPDATE ON THE RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES FOR PUBLIC SERVICES



“What would coming to physical Worship look like?”

Here are a few brief highlights:

- People need to arrive and will need to be admitted by a Warden keeping two metres apart
- A 21 Day Register of those attending is required by Track and Trace.
- Sanitising gel etc will be available, although you will need to bring your own facemask if you wish to wear one (they are not compulsory).
- People will be directed to their seats and people are asked to seat in ‘households’ of one or more people, two meters apart.
- Paper Orders of Service are restricted, and so we will mainly be using the screen. However, a few large print copies of Orders of Service will be available for those who need them.
- Unfortunately, we are not permitted to share in congregational singing for the time being but there will be music in various forms as part of the service.
- Holy Communion will be a part of the Service but will be optional for those who wish to receive it. Communion will be in the form of Bread only at present.
- Children and young people are very much welcome at the service. However, the Children’s Corner itself in both Churches needs to be closed at the moment. If you could bring some activity for your young person with you that would be very much appreciated.
- Although we are not able to offer refreshments, we hope to have ten minutes at the end of the service to be outside, socially distanced, in order to be able to socialise and catch up with one another each week (weather permitting).
- The service is expected to last for approximately fifty minutes, and we will be joined throughout by those Online.

OUR CORE VALUES

- **The need for a Personal commitment to Prayer** – if we can pray then this opens us to so many gifts: humility, joy, comfort, compassion, forgiveness, generosity – all seen in the ‘mirror’ of our own lives from a God who first chose to love us. It is the most direct way to engage in the life of the Spirit.
- **Be Kind** – we are living in unprecedented times and there is also much hurt and indeed anger around. It is so easy to take things personally and to be hurt and/or to respond in like manner. ‘Being Kind’ is NOT an easy option, but it is a way to offer the world something (and we would say the world ‘someone’) who thinks different – and given that this involved the Cross, “Be Kind” is actually likely to cost.

- **“There is no them, only US”** – we are two village Churches and as small communities we can get used to our own comforts and ways. But we have also been joined during this time by ‘others.’ In our own struggle of maintaining relationships with existing members (especially those who don’t have access to computers and social media) as best we can, it’s so easy to create a variety of distinctions of “them” and “us.” Overcoming this can be a REAL challenge – comparable to the Gentile community joining what was at first a community solely emerging out of a Jewish context. The Daily Blog reading for (7th July), which David Kemp kindly lead for us (Day 32), couldn’t be more appropriate:

Acts: 15:28-29:

²⁸ It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹ You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

In other words, a “new normal” – no Purity Laws, no Sabbath Laws, no requirement of circumcision etc – simply a “new US” based around, not just abstinence, although that can seem at first how this text can read - but around Jesus, and being sensitive to the blessings that He can give: a new community which valued and took the culture and contextual needs of all its parts not only into ‘consideration’ but which saw diversity as something to be valued and embraced. We may not be Jews and Gentiles, but we have:

- Existing and potential new members
- Traditional worshippers and those who value contemporary worship
- Those who like physical worship, those who join us online
- Church and wider village
- Banwell and Congresbury
- Old and Young
- Clergy and Laity
- the list goes on.

The challenge, and the possibility, is to live by “there is no longer ‘them,’ only US”

- **We need to start slowly and build carefully, safely and steadily** – with patience and perseverance. This is not easy:
 - There will be those who wish to move ahead more rapidly, in the belief momentum is crucial
 - And there will be those who reminisce and hanker after “the good old days,” even if it is a return to Egypt.

Holding all these views and opinions together, not least around how people view and respond to change itself, will be a challenge, and need:

- Good communication
- Personal conversation
- Valuing of a variety of opinions
- And much compassion, grace, and, from time to time, humour.

And to that end we will do our best.

'New birth' is never easy. Even today it has much risk, considerable pain, and there can be many setbacks along the way as everyone has to explore what being 'new' means. But with these "Core Values," and with the companionship of the Holy Spirit, much is possible.

I would like to thank Caz, our Youth Worker, for creating a new banner which we hope to display in some way in both our Churches.

Matt Thomson

