

Dear Friends

This update comes to you a little earlier this week as given recent government announcements relevant to churches I wanted to put you in the loop as soon as possible.

Phased opening of churches

On 6 June it was announced, as a complete surprise to all of us and with just an hour's notice to the Church of England, that places of worship may be opened with effect from Monday 15 June for private prayer by the public. It then transpired that this was actually planned thinking and would be confirmed by the government on 9 June.

On 9 June the government then announced that also from 15 June, where places of worship are opening for private prayer they may also, subject to various conditions, hold small funerals.

As you can imagine there has been a flurry of activity at national and Diocesan level to get updated guidelines and advice out to churches, and no sooner had one set been issued at the beginning of the week, another set came out today along with a letter from our Bishops and Archdeacons.

It has been made very clear that the decision as to whether to open churches for private prayer (and then the possibility of funerals) is entirely down to the PCC and the Incumbent (Vicar) of each church. Essentially all that has been announced is the permission to do so. It is up to us to take it up or not.

There are a number of considerations and practicalities that we have to work through in making that decision, and also the context that Covid-19 is not on the wane in the South West in the same way as further East. Our 'R' number remains near 1.

The Church of England has provided each Church with a detailed risk assessment to work through and various other guidelines on safe use of a church building in these times.

Myself, as the Incumbent, and the 5 PCC's are all working through what has been announced and the detail that comes with that and we will decide together what the most appropriate course of action is for our churches and communities.

It is a very careful balance of pastoral appropriateness of the use of the building against the increased risk that poses. There are also a number of challenging practicalities, such as cleaning after use, that can only be carried out by non-vulnerable people – and as rural churches I'm afraid we are quite short of willing church cleaners under the age of 70!

We will take the time we need to get re-opening right and in a safe way. Do get in contact if you have any queries.

I am often reminded of St Paul in times like this when faced with such decisions. It is a paraphrase I have used before in these communications, but it is worth repeating. On exercising 'rights' he taught strongly that just because we can do something does not mean we should or must. It is better to run the race well than set off too fast and not finish at all.

I will of course keep you all fully informed as things progress

Other News:

Discussion Groups:

Tomorrow there is a Zoom meeting open to all for a general discussion, but of course the main topic will be thinking about opening churches. All very welcome, but especially to PCC members.

Thursday 11th June at 11am:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/76258130320?pwd=ZDIHY05IT01LMnh5aVlrdk54SXZkZz09>

Meeting ID: 762 5813 0320

Password: twoshires

There is a second meeting just for PCC members and Churchwardens on Friday 12th June at 2pm.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/76992947866?pwd=K05YUnh1cUsvaUJlUm1kbIBDRFNCUT09>

Meeting ID: 769 9294 7866

Password: twoshires

Prayer & Worship

Thursday Evening Zoom:

It was great to be able to include some hymns at the Thursday Evening Zoom prayer time last week and to see a good number of people. Tomorrow it is the feast of Corpus Christi, the thanksgiving for Holy Communion. The worship will be live on Zoom at 7:30pm and will follow a similar pattern to the Easter Day service, being an informal celebration of communion through the sharing of bread.

ALL welcome. Link is below and if you are joining please do have to hand some bread so that we can share bread together at the appropriate time in the service. I will try and get a text version up online beforehand also.

Evening Worship – 7:30pm 11 June:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/71784007120?pwd=enlWbXA0aWNUdkRqN2VOL3hpQ1g1dz09>

Meeting ID: 717 8400 7120

Password: twoshires

Sunday Worship

Thank you to all who joined in with our Trinity Sunday worship. If you missed it you can watch the video online on YouTube (search under Two Shires Benefice) or on the Benefice Sunday Service page: <https://twoshires.wordpress.com/sunday-service>.

This Sunday the worship is led by Rev'd Judith and will be available at the page above for all. As always there will also be text available to print and circulate to those offline.

For your prayers:

The Sick – All those you know who are ill or struggling in any way. The following are also included by name:

Rob Allen; Lynne Applegarth; Phyllis Baker; Margaret Bandy; Sue Bennett; Sue Cheese; Terry Conway; Nick Frankau; Paul Glazier; David Goodwill; Mike Heywood; Joy Howard; Ann Jarvis; Val Joslin; Mark Lindsey; Frank Long; Peter McHugh; Diana Rowlands; Ann Ricketts; Jim Tucker; Rosemary Walley; Rosemary Walton; Vivien Wheaton; Alan Wills, Anna Woodward; Pamala Young; Hannah (Dennis Hunt's granddaughter); Milly granddaughter of Jane & Alan Rudkin; Gillian Muggeridge

For the Bereaved - The family & friends of: Denise Nicholls; Andy Partridge; John Massey; Derek Wicketts; Dave Checkley; Heather King's son; Hubert Hutchinson; Roy Frecknell; Dave Woodland

Collect & Post-Communion Prayers (Trinity 1)

God of truth, help us to keep your law of love
and to walk in ways of wisdom, that we may find true life
in Jesus Christ your Son.

Eternal Father, we thank you for nourishing us with these heavenly gifts:
may our communion strengthen us in faith, build us up in hope,
and make us grow in love; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Scripture for the week

Wednesday 10 June: 1 Kings 18:20-39; Matt 5:17-19

Thursday 11 June: Gen 14:18-20; John 6:51-58 (Corpus Christi)

Friday 12 June: Acts 11:19-end; John 15:12-17 (St Barnabas)

Saturday 13 June: 1 Kings 19:19-end; Matt 5:33-37

Sunday 14 June: Romans 5:1-8; Matt 9:35 – 10:8 (1st after Trinity)

Monday 15 June: 1 Kings 21:1-16; Matt 5:38-42

Tuesday 16 June: 1 Kings 21:17-end; Matt 5:43-end (St Richard)

Wednesday 17 June: 2 Kings 2:1, 6-14; Matt 6:1-6, 16-18

With every blessing,

Philip

The Reverend Philip Butcher