Dear friends

I am delighted to inform you that following government guidance we will be in a position to resume Sunday services at St Leonard’s on Sunday 5th July 2020. There will be two services at **9:15am** and **10.30am**. For now, they will both be Common Worship while I get to grips with the new way of doing things, the BCP and Church Parade services will be returning.

There are lots of things that have been put into place to ensure everyone’s health and safety, which will need to be fully adhered to. Please read the guidance so that you will understand the protocols before attending the services.

Before the service starts the front door and internal door will be open so people do not have to touch them. Please leave them open when you enter, they will be closed before the service starts. There is also a hand hygiene point in the entrance porch which we ask you to use on arrival and on leaving.

Single use service sheets will be available at the back of church and must then be taken away by the person using it at the end of the service, please do not leave them behind. They must NOT be given out by a sidesperson but collected by each individual as they enter.

There will be a one-way system in church which is clearly marked. Entrance is up the main aisle and exit down the side aisle, please adhere to this.

People must maintain social distance. This should be 2 metres where possible. There is no obligation to wear face masks, but you are welcome to do so if you wish. Alternate pews are clearly marked showing which are being used and which are closed and marked out with 2 metre social distancing. Each pew can seat two socially distanced individuals or more if there is a family unit. A family unit is considered those who live together in a household and any single person who is joined in a bubble with them.

During the service there cannot be any congregational or choral singing and no exchanging of the Peace. Communion will be received from the chancel steps, into the hands with arms outstretched. Communion will consist of the bread only and not the wine. The one-way system will be used when receiving communion. Everyone in a pew will need to enter the Communion line, whether you receive Communion or just a blessing. This avoids the need for people to climb over one another.

Regarding the offertory collection, cash poses a risk of infection. For weekly envelope givers the new boxes of envelopes will be available for you to collect. However, the simplest and safest method of giving is to do so direct from your bank. If you haven’t done so yet, perhaps now is the time to switch to giving by standing order? We can easily let you have the details. Collection baskets will be left at the back of church, rather than handed down the pews. There will also be the option to use contactless card giving.

If you bring children with you, they will need to remain in the pew with you and there will be no Children’s Corner. Do bring your own quiet toys/books/colouring as the bags, toys, etc have all been tidied away.

We will need to record the name and contact information of those who attend in case this needs to be supplied to contact tracers. This will be kept securely and destroyed after three weeks.

The services will be kept short and there will be no refreshments or fellowship time after the service. This is for your safety and also to enable us to clean the church between services.

Due to social distance in the pews, we have reduced seating. This means you likely will not be able to sit in your preferred section and/or pew during this phase of reopening. Should there be a situation where you come on spec without booking, and the church has no more safe seating please don’t be offended if you are told that unfortunately you can’t come in on this occasion.

Funerals are now possible in church, as are weddings (with restricted numbers of 30 people), we are yet to receive guidance on baptisms.

We will record one of the Sunday services and we will make it available online via You Tube, Facebook and Twitter for people not attending to watch at home. This is something we are considering continuing indefinitely as many people who wouldn’t normally attend church have been worshipping with us online and we wish to continue to engage with them.

There is also the free Church of England resource called ’Daily Hope’ which is available by ringing 0800 804 8044. There is a choice of listening, from hymns to a full service and the Mothers’ Union midday prayer.

The fact that church is open for worship should not make anyone feel obliged to come at this stage. Those who are shielding should not attend worship until advised to do so by the authorities. Others who are, or live with those, at increased risk should they contract COVID-19 should think carefully about whether or not it is right for them to come at this stage. Our primary concern is everyone’s safety, so if you are vulnerable, sick or simply apprehensive about gathering with others at this time, please consider staying at home. I am sure everyone will respect the concerns and situations others are in, and each Sunday we will hold those unable to worship with us in our thoughts and particularly in our prayers.

Until I can ascertain demand for services, I will need to initiate a booking system so too many people don’t turn up and run the risk of being turned away. Please phone on 01254 247039 (leave a message if out) or e mail on revtswindells@aol.com stating the date and time of the service you wish to attend, the names and addresses of those attending and whether they are a family or bubble who can sit together or an individual who needs to be socially distanced.

As you are aware, I have chosen not to preside at the Eucharist whilst the church has been closed. It did not feel right for me personally, to receive communion with my family at home whilst I was unable to share it with my church family. So along with many of you, returning to church to receive the Eucharist will be a great joy and privilege after such a long a fast from it.

This new way of doing things will take some getting used to, and we anticipate that there will be some bumps in the road, but we will get through this together – We Are St Leonard’s!  Please understand that these new procedures and protocols enable us to safely worship while remaining in compliance with all of the guidelines we must follow.

With my love and prayers



Tracy