

Not so much a sermon

Hurray! You may well think – no sermon, woo hoo! True, I haven't based it on this week's readings but I do still want you to think about things so I am not letting you off completely. (Now now, no naughty words please.)

It is very likely that by next Sunday you will have the privilege of actually being able to attend church for a Communion Service. We are still awaiting details but the permissions have been given and, providing things don't go pear shaped, Holy Cross will have her doors open, not just for private prayer, but for a Eucharist.

You will notice that I used the word 'privilege' in that announcement. Who would have thought that we would ever consider being able to worship together a privilege, and yet the circumstances of the last few months have proved to us all just how important gathering as a church family is.

All of you have expressed just how much you have missed gathering to worship and, if nothing else, this current crisis has revealed to us just how important our faith, church family and worship is; not just to our spiritual well-being but also to our physical, mental and emotional health as well.

But things are not returning to 'normal' and gathering and worshipping will need to be conducted differently. These changes will only be temporary but, at this stage, we do not yet know just how long temporary will be.

We may well find that these necessary changes are frustrating but we will need to remind ourselves that gathering and worshipping together at all IS a privilege and that we must never take our freedom to gather for worship for granted again.

So what changes will be necessary as we begin to open again? Below are a number of changes I have considered and put in place; most are based on the current instructions from the government and advice from the diocese, some are my own ideas as to how to respond on a local level. These are likely to be open to 'tweaks' as the situation changes.

- We will continue to open every day between 11am and 12 noon for private prayer. This is likely to continue for only a couple more weeks as the church building becomes available to conduct funerals.
- At this stage I will not be opening for baptisms – this will, of course, be reviewed on a regular basis.
- Communion services will be available at the following times:
 - Sunday morning – 9am
 - Sunday morning – 10.30am
 - Wednesday morning – 9.30am
- Please consider carefully which service you would prefer to attend. Both services will be identical and both in the main body of the church to enable the necessary distance between worshippers.

- Although there will be music at both the Sunday services singing is currently not allowed. This is due to the projective nature of singing that spreads the virus further than simple speech.
- No books or sheets will be in use – again to prevent cross contamination by touch – the service will be projected on the screens as usual.
- Instructions as to cleansing, seating and procedure will be on display in the church on your arrival.
- Please do keep to all the social distancing guidelines and where possible use the following one way system – IN through the front doors – OUT via the side door.
- There will be no need for servers or sidespeople etc. at this point.
- The area of greatest risk of cross contamination is in the toilet so, for these shorter services, I have decided that the **toilet will not be in use until further notice.**

The last few weeks have been a trial for us all and many are 'chomping at the bit' to begin socialising again; however, we must bear in mind that the virus is still in the community and that not taking care may result in the government re-instituting some lock-down procedures.

As we prepare to return now is a good time to think of and pray for those who cannot worship openly, for whom any kind of Christian gathering is either dangerous or just plain impossible. We have felt the loss over these few weeks and can, perhaps, appreciate how much we have to give thanks for.

It will be a delight to see you all again as we gather at our Lord's Table. God bless you all.