

## ***Planning for our future at Christ Church***

21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

Dear All,

### **We are continuing to consider when we might open our Church buildings again**

The Deacons, along with Mike Smith, our Property Chair, met again yesterday to review our July decision regarding the reopening of our Church buildings and gathering together again for worship on a Sunday morning. As we mentioned before, we would all love our Church to be physically together again for worship, fellowship and serving our community but there remains a lot for us to carefully consider. We are now exploring what might be possible and are discussing how feasible it might be for us to open the Church buildings again, perhaps part way through September. For example, if we do end up deciding to return to our building, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September is one date under consideration as the nearest Sunday to 18<sup>th</sup> September which marks 300 hundred years since the Church's first worship service on the Tacket Street site. However, we are acutely aware that very little has changed since we last met.

### **What would gathering for worship be like?**

Before any gathering or any event could take place, there would have to be extensive preparation. We have begun this and would need at least a couple of weeks to finish our preparation of a 'COVID Secure' Sanctuary and building. We would need to review and update our Risk Assessments for the buildings and our staff. We would need to write a comprehensive cleaning plan, purchase and set out signage and floor markings, mark out the pews to be used and remove all the seat cushions, books and toys. This is not the exhaustive preparation list! Of course, a thorough cleaning regime would also be required after any Service or building use. We would need to reinstate our arrangement with NCP so that we could arrange for those who wish to park in the Cox Lane car park to be on their 'white list' again for Sunday parking.

When it comes to gathering for worship, we would all need to:

- Make our own way to Church as sharing lifts would not be possible.
- Bring and wear our facemasks.
- Queue with social distancing and enter one (or one household) at a time.
- Use hand sanitiser on entry and again on exit.
- Record who is present for NHS Track and Trace purposes and obtain your consent to make this information available.
- Sit as directed by the deacons who will be serving as stewards and only with those from our own household. (The gallery seating area would not be open).
- Maintain social distancing of 2 metres with one another at all times.
- Sadly, limit our socialising on Church property and there would be no handshakes or hugs with one another.

While Stephen would be able to play the organ, we would not be able to sing hymns and songs together. It might be possible for a few choir members to sing the hymns but even though this is now allowed, it is not necessarily easy to achieve. There would be no Junior Church or children's corner. Children would have to stay with their families in the Service and would not be able to spend time together playing and socialising. The Service would be as short as possible with no socialising afterwards, (yes, that sadly means no tea or coffee!) and we would have to leave in turn as directed with no chatting outside in the garden or Church car park.

## **The risk to us as a Church Family**

Any of us who fall into a COVID-19 higher risk category would need to carefully consider whether they should be returning to the Church buildings at this point in time. For us as a Church family, that does in fact include quite a lot of us. As we said before, we do not want folk who have an increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19 to be at an increased risk of infection. As a Diaconate, we feel pastorally protective and responsible (as well as legally responsible!) for the care and wellbeing of all who are part of our Church family and indeed, for those who might wish to join us once we are back in our building. That said, we do, of course, respect individual decisions. To help you assess your own risk with regards to COVID-19, we have included a personal risk assessment for you to use in your own deliberations.

## **What is our next step?**

The Deacons will meet again next Thursday 27th August to further discuss possibilities and try to arrive at a decision regarding whether or not we should open for worship in September. We are open to the idea of gathering together again but do remain cautious. We would like to hear what you all think at this stage. This will help us when we meet again next week.

Please carefully consider:

- a) Whether you think we should open the Church building for Sunday worship in September
- b) Using the personal risk assessment, whether you would attend Church if we move forward with this in September.

We will use this information to assess whether there is a viable way forward and to draft a seating plan. As you know, all of us are under the care of a deacon and your pastoral deacon will be in touch with you over the next few days to ask your views on points a) and b) above. Rob will then collate all of our thoughts and intentions ready for the Deacons' Meeting next Thursday.

In the meantime, we continue to be the Church together in our 'lockdown' mode and will maintain our current approach to worship, fellowship and pastoral care. We continue to do our best as a Diaconate to support and care for folk within our Church family but if ever you need some support or are aware that someone else might, please do reach out to one of us and we will do all we can to help.

Every blessing to you all,

*Neil and Rob*

*On behalf of all the Christ Church Deacons*