



Abington Pastoral Letter No.29 11.09.2020

Dear Friends

The new 'rule of six' and worship

It was really lovely to see so many of you on last Sunday. I was delighted to see the return of the choir. Many of you might be wondering now what happens to our worship regarding the new 'rule of six'.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, who chairs the Church of England's recovery group, said initially:

"I welcome confirmation from the Prime Minister that places of worship can still hold more than six people in total, despite the new restrictions on gatherings, and the reassurance that public worship can continue. We will continue to work with the Government on specific areas relating to our churches and church-based activities."

And then the nation church has issued the following statement. This is the latest statement as of now:

The Government has announced that new regulations relating to the 'rule of six' are being prepared. Those regulation will not come into effect until Monday September 14 2020. Until then all of the advice below continues to apply as before. The Church of England is engaging with the Government and will provide new advice to churches but we do not expect to be in a position to provide that until the week beginning September 14.

There are still grey areas in terms of how the new rules affect various church related activities such as choir practice. I will update you when I know more.

In the meantime, our churchyard service will take place, weather permitting, on the 13th of September at 10 am. Many of you may have noticed that many people stopped and watched

as we worship. Some took even photos.

It would be very important that we set a good example to the public. Please keep to the social distancing. I also would like to encourage you to wear face coverings where possible especially where you cannot keep the distance as we gather. If you are feeling unwell or have any concern, then please do stay at home and worship with us online.

While we gather in the churchyard, the church building may be open for children to use the tower room if they wish and for their parents to supervise them. Unless you are a guardian of a child or helping the worship team to move equipment, I ask everyone else to kindly refrain from entering the church building. If you need to enter the building for other reasons, please do speak to Donald or Dianne or one of the ushers so that they can help you.

When will we go inside the building?

The ministry team has decided that we will have our first indoor service on Sunday the 27th of September. This is to give us time to prepare ourselves for indoor worship in advance before things get colder and darker. And then the following Sunday we are planning to celebrate our Harvest on 4 October in the churchyard again. After that, we will continue to gather in the church building on Sundays at 10 am. So here is the plan.

13 September: Churchyard service

20 September: Churchyard service

27 September: Indoor service

4 October: Churchyard service (Harvest)

11 October and onwards: Indoor service

How many can we have for indoor services?

The maximum number we can have is 30. We may have a few more but the more people we have the higher the risk will get. This number 30 will include the worship team such as myself, the live-stream operator, ushers, the choir and so on. The choir has very kindly offered to make slots available so that more people can have the opportunities to come and worship. However the actual number of available seats will be around 20 or less. This means each person or each

family may get the chance to physically attend the indoor service once a month or less. If you couldn't book your seat when you phoned, then Dianne will help you to find another slot for you for another week.

It is a real challenge to us, given that we are a church with average Sunday attendance more than 100. However if you would remember how we discovered and was amazed by those new ways of worship during the lockdown, you would know that we can focus on God's promises rather than focusing on all the problems. We can remember how God has led us to see what we didn't see before; how he encouraged us and nourished us; how he transformed us, our lives, our homes into his own church. I am confident that we will be blessed and will find a way to bless others through the grace of God.

There are still so many things to be thankful for

Since we introduced Online Worship, the attendance in online spaces have been ever so growing. I will share with you some detailed data at some point. It is amazing how many people watched the service and how long they actually stay watching.

When we first gathered in the churchyard on 30 August. Our service on that day was watched by 760 viewers on Facebook only. Our average number of viewers for Sunday worship has been about 200 on Facebook only. So that was a big increase. And then when we gathered for the second time in the churchyard which was last Sunday on 6 September, our service was watched by more than 2,600 viewers on Facebook only. There was even a comment from a lady from Bahrain whose daughter visited Abington and saw us worshipping and send her mum a photo of our church. Her name is Susan. She said how much she appreciated worshipping with us online and sent her blessings to us as a fellow Christian. Here is her message

Hello from Bahrain, Middle East 😊 (born in Lancashire), most of our churches (around 80) are still closed. Our daughter sent a photo of your church yesterday while visiting the park. We pray for us to gather together again very soon. In JESUS Name. Amen! This is very special pastor Jun. Thank you for your faith, hope, love ❤️ for all people. Philipians 4. Amen! Susan Hughes

Friends, when we worship together, pray together and show in public how we love our God and each other, we glorify God and God touches the hearts of people through us. Prayer, worship, songs of praises, they do change lives of others as well as ours. There are so many things to

give thanks for and to celebrate even in the middle of the global pandemic. God is good. He is faithful. He is with us.

May God bless you and all those whom you love and care for. May he guide us and lead us through these difficult times. May we see Christ who is always with us in the midst of everything.

With love in Christ

Jun