

(Update: Friday 19th June)

I'm sure you will have heard on the news on Sunday about the easing of restrictions so that we *may consider* opening our church buildings for individual private prayer from Monday 15th June. This is welcome news, and a step towards being able to worship in church again (in some way) in the future. The Churchwardens and I have met to discuss if we felt we could open our church buildings in a safe way and, if so, and how to do this.

I am delighted to say that as of Monday 15th June St. George's Church will be open for individual private prayer.

To ensure this can be done safely for everyone the following has been agreed:

- The church building has been "spring cleaned"
- I will conduct Morning Prayer at 8am at St. George's on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. (And at the Mission Church on a Tuesday.)
- The church will then be open – unsupervised* - from 9am to 5pm, seven days a week
- The north-door door handles (internal and external) will be sanitised every day when the church is unlocked
- Hand sanitiser will be provided in the porch and inside the church. Everyone must use the hand sanitiser on entry to - and exit from - the church. (There will also be E45 cream to use as well for those with sensitive skin conditions.)
- No one should come the church for individual private prayer if they have Covid-19 symptoms or have been in contact with someone in the last 14-days who has the symptoms
- Social distancing (2m) must be maintained if more than one person is in the church at the same time
- Notices will be prominently displayed regarding hand sanitising, social distancing, and the restriction if you have symptoms
- The open-plan area at the back of the church will be cordoned off, and all paperwork has been removed to reduce "multiple contact" surfaces. (*I am working on a way to try and provide prayer resources that can be used in church that minimise the risk of transfer of the virus.*)
- The church will be cleaned once a week - as previously - but pew shelves (a potential point of multiple-contact) will be sanitised not just dusted.

*Ideally we would like the church to be manned when it is open. This to provide a personal welcome to people, but also so that we can encourage everyone to hand sanitise on entry/exit; we can also then gauge the "footfall" into church and assess whether we can relax any of the above or need to do more to ensure the safety of all. If you feel you can volunteer some time, either during the week or at a weekend, then please contact me. (And if no one visits when you are there it would also be a wonderful time for you to have your own peace and quiet with God in a place of sanctuary and centuries of prayer.)

Caution: The restrictions have been eased, but the virus has not gone away; it is still a serious threat. We all need to play our part in keeping our church open for private prayer. If we all do not comply with the requirements to hand sanitise and social distance then it will simply delay the day we can open the churches for worship.

I look forward to seeing you in church at some time for quiet prayer, and to the day when we can worship together. In the meantime: keep well, keep safe and keep praying.

God bless.



Revd David Commander