

Dear Friends,

Through this letter I want to share with you the results of last weekend's questionnaire. First of all, I would like to offer a big "Thank You" to all of you who responded. As I indicated last week, the purpose of the form was to get a snapshot of how Parishioners feel at the moment so that, with awareness of and respect for each other's views, we may find the best way forward.

My reading of the situation is that people definitely want to re-establish some sort of normality and that we should undertake this process gently and cautiously, whilst keeping our ultimate goal always in sight. It was very gratifying to see how many parishioners felt wholly safe or mainly safe when coming to church here. It is important to remind ourselves that not every parish community has been so blessed and I take this opportunity of offering sincerest thanks to everyone who has helped us achieve such a high standard.

During this past week, I looked again at the Step 4 Guidance issued recently by the Bishops of England & Wales and how each local church community can make its own plan to deal with the current situation. The Bishops say: 'Although any measures adopted locally will not have "the rule of law", there is a strong emphasis on common sense and risk averse activities to continue to mitigate against the transmission of the virus which is still prevalent in society'. And under the heading "Mitigations", they say 'Churches should continue to provide hand sanitiser at entrances and exits and face coverings are strongly recommended to be worn by those in church'.

In the light of all the above, I am therefore warmly recommending and requesting that face coverings should continue to be worn in our church building. This is for the time being and will be reviewed at the beginning of September, or earlier if conditions change significantly.

We will also need to address the whole question of social distancing and I would like to look at that next week. At the same time I want to move forward with having the church open again for private prayer, of returning the Sacrament of Reconciliation to our Parish Schedule, of restoring monthly Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, of looking at how best to have Holy Communion in its usual place in Mass, of celebrating Morning Prayer before Weekday Mass and of having Mass on Thursday mornings again.

Please continue to book for Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses until the issue of social distancing is resolved.

With prayers and best wishes,

Fr David