

20th August 2020

Dear friends,

It's been just over five months since we were last able to gather in church to worship together. Our church life has not, of course, stopped during that time! Pastoral callers continue to ring the most vulnerable among us on a weekly basis, and to stay in touch regularly with us all; the Earley Help Hub is supporting those who still need help with medication, shopping, and so on; our Children's Church along with other services and events have been taking place online. But, of course, our buildings are important, and we've been delighted in recent weeks to see people coming in for some quiet and personal prayer, as well as some groups returning to our Church Hall. Thank you to our churchwardens and office staff who have been working so hard on making that happen as safely as we can.

While we can of course pray wherever we are, and by ourselves, it's also an important part of our spiritual life to be together to pray and hear God's Word. So we're delighted that we can now **resume public worship in the church building**. We will begin with a **10am service on Sundays from 23rd August**. This will initially be a simple, said service of Morning Prayer, lasting about 35-40 minutes. There is guidance over the page about the arrangements to keep us all as safe as possible, please read this if you are coming.

During September, we hope to resume Holy Communion services on some Sundays as well as an all-age service on Sunday afternoons, more details on that to follow. For the moment, we will not be resuming evening or midweek services, though we will keep that under review. There will be some organ or piano music but for now there will be no singing, and a decision on Tots and Teddies is waiting for the UK Government to publish guidance on toddler groups.

Returning to services in church after this break will be an emotional moment. Some of us will feel great joy at the thought of being together in church, while some of us will not yet feel able to be in a public gathering. We may feel frustrated by the restrictions or anxious about the speed at which society is reopening. It will be important to remember we may all be feeling differently and may not know quite what we feel, and important to look out for each other as we navigate these unfamiliar circumstances. Because we know not everyone will feel able to be in church we will continue weekly digital services at least until the end of September.

We also plan that church will remain **open for personal prayer on Thursdays until the end of September** for those who would like to pray and reflect. The weekly update, website, and Facebook will regularly be updated with the opening times, as well as details of services and events. If you do not currently receive our weekly update please email admin@earleystpeters.org.uk and we will add you to the list.

Of course, we will keep arrangements under review and continue to follow the latest UK Government and Church of England guidance. Please do speak to the clergy or churchwardens if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions about any aspect of our church life. We continue to pray, as always, for our church family, our wider community, and indeed the global community as we live through these strange and difficult times.

May God bless and keep us all. With our love and prayers as always, *Hannah and Philip*

Earley St Peter's – Guidelines for Coming to Public Worship

10am Sundays from 23rd August

We look forward to welcoming people to worship. Please follow this guidance, which is intended to keep everyone who comes into the building as safe as possible, and to minimise (though we cannot eliminate) the risk of transmitting the infection.

- You should not come to church if you have any of the symptoms which are associated with Covid-19, such as: a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. You should self-isolate and ring NHS on 111 or see www.nhs.uk/coronavirus if you think you may have symptoms.
- You should not come to church if you have been told to self-isolate by your doctor or by any NHS body such as Test and Trace.
- We will take every step we can to keep church as safe as possible, including risk-assessment and cleaning procedures; but deciding to come must be your responsibility.
- To help with cleaning and hygiene quite a lot of equipment and furniture has been removed, particularly from the rear of church.
- The law in England now requires the wearing of face coverings in places of worship, unless you are under 11 years old or are exempt for a medical reason.
- You will need to enter by the normal way and please sanitise your hands on the way into church; there will be some hand-sanitiser available but if you can bring your own that will help our supplies!
- On arrival you will be asked to identify yourself to the welcomers so we can record who is present. If we do not have your details on our system you will be asked to give your name and a phone number. This information will be kept securely for 21 days should public health authorities ask for it, and then destroyed.
- A welcomer will show you to a seat; please maintain physical distancing of two metres from anyone who you do not live with or who is not in your support bubble. Seats will be marked so that people can stay two metres apart. Please follow the instructions of the welcomers about where to sit, this is important for helping us to maintain distancing and hygiene.
- Please catch any coughs and sneezes in tissues or the corner of your elbow – 'catch it, bin it, kill it'!
- The toilets in the Church Hall will be open for those who need them, but please do not go into other parts of the Hall building.
- At the end of the service you will be asked to leave by the south door and to sanitise your hands as you go.