



Thursday 7 January, 2021

Dear Members of St Marys,

You may have read that, despite the national lockdown, churches are still permitted to meet for communal worship. This is the result of their good track record so far in this pandemic in managing the inherent risks. Having discussed the situation with the wardens and met with the standing committee, I have decided that we will continue to celebrate Holy Communion in person on Sunday at 10.30am. We will also continue to offer a variety of services online during the month which the majority of people are currently accessing. The standing committee, in balancing the health risks of opening with the pastoral harm of closing felt, that, at the moment, we should stay open for those who feel that our online services do not meet their spiritual needs. If, on the other hand, you feel that the online service is sufficient, please do access that via our website. We will review this decision in a week's time and then again at the PCC.

Each person should then make their own decision of whether to attend based on their own particular circumstances, needs and assessment of risk. Some, including Jean and Kevin, have decided to wait until the vaccine is available to them or their families before being involved at the church in person but will continue to contribute remotely. Most of the ministry team are able and willing to continue. Those in the vulnerable categories should carefully consider the risks which are considerably higher than a month ago. Those who have members of their household who are extremely vulnerable (i.e. shielding) should



take particular care. (Steve, our other churchwarden, is having to step back, except in emergencies, for this reason.) This also applies to those who have volunteered to clean. No one should feel obliged to go out at the moment and if in doubt should stay at home.

Obviously, we will continue to reduce the risks as much as possible by wearing masks, sitting 2 metres apart, cleansing hands and providing one-time use service sheets and plenty of ventilation (so wrap up warm!). You must not attend if you have a new persistent cough, high temperature or change in sense of taste or smell. If you are generally feeling unwell please stay at home unless your doctor advises otherwise. We cannot, however, eliminate the risks entirely because it is possible to have COVID 19 and pass it on without knowing it.

Personally, I feel there is benefit in our meeting in person to pray for our community and to receive the sacrament which I believe is 'an effectual sign of grace'. If you are willing to help with cleaning the church or stewarding as a sidesperson or leading intercessions or reading (online or in person) please contact churchwarden Jean Strickland who also will take bookings for the Sunday service. You can contact her on 01243 552825. (email jean@strickland.co.uk)
May God bless us.

Yours in Christ,

Rev Tim Ward, Vicar