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You may need a cup of tea to help you get through this long letter, but it is good news!

Dear

From Sunday 19th July, we will once again be able to worship together in body as well as in spirit. However, we know that there will still be some who are not able to join us physically because of their own health concerns, or those of their family. If you are in that category do not worry, we have not forgotten you! Please be sensible with your health, and that of others and if you are feeling unwell, please stay at home. The last thing we want is to become an infection hot-spot or responsible for a local lock-down! We will continue to provide an on-line service and are planning to make a video of the church service to put on the website later in the day if we can. We are still remembering you with love and in our prayers and we will meet again in person one day soon.

To begin with we will follow the usual pattern of services so there will be communion on Sunday 19th (third Sunday) at 10am and again on 2nd August (first Sunday) at 10am with Services of the Word on the Sundays in between. I am not yet reinstating the 8am service but the 9.30am service on alternate Wednesdays will be a BCP Communion service. This will begin on Wednesday 22nd July and again on 5th August. On the other Wednesdays we will keep the church open between 10 and 12 for private prayer as it is now. The last Saturday session for private prayer will be 11th July. We need to keep the church closed between Sunday and Wednesday to give us close to 72 hours for the virus to die. The current cleaning rota is suspended until further notice as other arrangements are in place.

We must all remember that the virus has not gone away, and still poses a serious risk to health, and this therefore will affect some areas relating to our worship. Please bring a mask or face-covering to wear in church. We are asking you to do this to make communion as safe as we can. We will have a limited supply of masks in church if you do not have one, but you must dispose of it at home. Please arrive in good time as there will be a socially distanced queue operating before you get into church (bring umbrellas if it looks like rain!). If you are in a 'bubble' and want to sit together, please arrive and queue together. Please let the outdoor sidesperson know if you cannot stand for long so they can hasten your entry. But we cannot offer physical assistance to help you get seated nor can people give lifts now. We will be entering by the porch door and leaving by the porch and tower doors. Both doors will be open during the service for improved ventilation so come prepared for drafts! Please note the current sidespersons rota is also suspended until further notice. I am afraid that currently we cannot open the hall to make the toilets available so that may mean that some of you feel unable to attend. Whilst the service will be shorter than usual the other complications will undoubtedly lengthen it. We cannot handle cash for a few weeks but if you wish to give by cheque or bank standing order that will be very welcome.

Please use the hand-sanitizer provided as you come into the Church. Please also remember to keep your distance from everyone else: six feet unless you are living in the same household. A sidesperson will ask for your phone number if we do not have it already alongside your permission to share data (GDPR). This is for the purposes of track and trace only and it will not be retained after 21 days. In the same way any visitors will need to give their full details to the sidesperson for track and trace and these will be destroyed after 21 days.

You will see that many of the pews are cordoned off to enable the maintenance of social distance. A sidesperson will direct you to where to sit. Please avoid sitting near an aisle (pews will indicate where not to sit). I know you will see people you are longing to talk to but it will be much safer for everyone if you wait until you are in the fresh air after the service and can do so at a safe distance and away from the paths.

Under the current restrictions, Communion will be given in the bread only. Use of the shared chalice is suspended but please be assured that we still receive the fullness of God’s presence. This includes the spiritual communion we intentionally make with those who are doing so at home and are united in one Body with us. God will make sure we lack nothing, if we come to Him with our earnest desire. Please remain seated and I will come to you with the bread in silence (masked and sanitized) so we limit any moving around to just me.

You will have probably heard or read that singing is not permitted in church and this is sadly the case. Further guidance is awaited but for now there will be no band, no organ and no choir. I know this will be hard for many of you. We will play some recorded music before the service and during communion. You will know, if for you, singing is as much a part of your worship as breathing. Please keep your mask on and sing in your head or very quietly under your breath and we will be able to stay safe and keep the music as part of our worship.

When the service is over please stay in your pew until you are directed by the sidesperson which exit to use. Hand sanitizer will be available at both exits. We will still have to wait some time before we can share in coffee and biscuits afterwards.

The various changes to our worship will seem odd, but then, just being together again for the first time since March will be odd, too. And though some of these restrictions and changes will be annoying, remember it is all done with love to keep us all safe. If this is how we carry His Cross, it is a light burden, really, and we know He carries it with us.

So, I look forward to seeing some of you soon, and continuing to pray with all of you!

Blessings,

Joy

PS the on-line newsletter is continuing