

*Lockdown may be over, the world and society changed, but the Love of God endures for ever.*

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I write as we begin to emerge from lockdown here in France with a few thoughts to share with you, but firstly, how are you after these weeks of lockdown? It has been a challenging time for many of us and we must learn to live with the virus. I am certain that the time of lockdown has prevented many infections and deaths that would have occurred among us, our families and friends.

I have given much thought and prayer as to how to care for you all, when to open the church again for worship together and how to do so safely. I have discussed my proposals with the Standing Committee and with the Church Council on 25 May.

**Although Government guidelines have allowed churches to open as from 24 May, we will resume services only when there is clear evidence of a declining and low level of infection maintained over the course of at least 14 days in the Hauts-de-France (currently a 'Red' zone.)**

I propose that the way forward is to take a step-by-step approach that helps us meet the needs of our church community and protect the health of each of us.

**Step 1: The first priority for each of us is to stay safe and protect others.**

- ❖ **Stay home and self-isolate even with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, mild fever, until you recover.**
- ❖ **If you have a fever ( $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention, but call by telephone in advance if possible.**
- ❖ **Please do not attend in-person church services if you are not feeling well or have a fever.**

**When worship in church resumes:**

- The entire church premises will have been cleaned with an anti-viral cleaner
- It is essential to observe a physical distance of at least 2 metres. Those who live together as one social unit will use an entire pew and everyone else will be seated 2 metres apart; I have done a rough calculation that we could seat some 30 people this way.
- Use of face masks will be required
- Systematic use of hand sanitiser on entering and leaving the building, don't forget to wash your hands with soap and water when you get home
- We will have a sign-in sheet at the entrance (please bring your own pen) so that we can identify and contact other people present at the same time as a person who later discovers they are infected.
- Unfortunately, much as we love to sing, we will not be able to do so, even wearing face masks, as this carries a high risk of transmission of the virus.
- Online giving, no offering plate
- Holy Communion, we will continue to receive only the consecrated bread.
- No tea and coffee before or after services.

- Please do not congregate for “small talk” after church, especially if groups of people are causing issues with others being able to remain at a safe distance (e.g. blocking the exit).
- All surfaces in church, outside and the toilets will be cleaned with anti-viral cleaner after each service
- There will be only one Sunday morning service at 10:30 am
- Evening Mosaic service; Women’s Bible Study; Men’s Breakfast online until the summer break
- Weekly video service continues until further notice; the Sunday Social@5pm will become monthly (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in the month) after Sunday 31 May, starting 14 June.

**Step 2 when small groups meet again at church:**

- Sunday Club participants will need to bring their own snacks for the time being.
- For all groups 2m physical distancing and a face mask is required, as well as the use of hand sanitiser/hand washing with soap.

I have kept you all in my prayers over the past weeks as well as being in touch with as many of you as I have contact details, and will continue to do so as we move forward over the coming weeks and months.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, refraining from physically gathering together to hear God’s holy word and receiving the sacrament of holy communion is itself an act of love for God and our neighbour. None of us has lost sight of the need to be in contact with each other and during this difficult time, we continue to build community, a sense of connectedness and prayer for each other. We are using the gift of technology as a way of sharing wherever you are, strengthening the bond of God’s love shared.

As and when the health professionals give us guidance that it is safe, under the conditions I have set out, to resume worship services in church, I will let you know and we can look forward to a mighty celebration of God’s love, mercy and grace together.

In the meanwhile,

If you need any kind of help, a chat, meeting at a distance, help with setting up Zoom/Skype, just let me know.

May God continue to bless each of us as we move forward under His guidance and inspiration.

Debbie

26 May 2020