



St Helen's Church

Loving God, loving others, loving the world

Notices for 14th June, 2020

My dear Friends

Yesterday (Wednesday) evening, St Helen's PCC met to discuss whether our church is in a position to reopen for private prayer, following the Government's announcement that this will be permitted from this weekend.

The PCC meeting was just one stage in a careful, prayerful process. First, I drafted a detailed risk assessment, measuring how we might reopen safely. Next, I met with our churchwardens, with Helen and Val, and, together, we revised the risk assessment. On Monday, the Standing Committee met, revised the risk assessment again, and listened carefully to how we each felt about reopening.

Yesterday evening, fourteen members of the PCC met on Zoom. Two others, unable to be there in person, sent comments. We spent over an hour carefully considering this single issue. First, PCC members helped us refine our risk assessment further. Next, every PCC member was given space to say if they felt the risk assessment meant we could reopen safely and if they thought we should. Every PCC member present felt that we should open the church for private prayer.

Their reasoning fell into three categories.

The first is pastoral. The PCC are aware how many people are going through really tough times in lock-

down: perhaps home is not the safe space it should be, either emotionally or even physically; perhaps they've been bereaved and feel they would be comforted by coming into church; perhaps the building is a place of spiritual refuge for them, a place they feel close to God.

The second is service. At the time of writing, none of the village churches in our Flagstaff Family of Churches are planning to reopen for private prayer. It may be that not many churches in town will open either. Opening St Helen's will be a resource, then, for our brothers and sisters across the area. Whatever our personal preferences about opening, we are aware that we are called to serve others for whom this will be important.

The third is mission. By opening our church, we may well be opening up conversations of faith with those who come, just as our online services have brought matters of faith into the heart of people's homes. The invitation we extend to people by being open will, we hope, reflect the invitation God makes to all humanity to know him and to love him.

These are good and compelling reasons, I think, but that is not to say that the PCC didn't feel a heavy weight of responsibility at the decision we made, not least because we recognise the different ways in which this news will be received. Some will welcome the opportunity to be able to go back into our church building.

Others will feel unable to face a building which will be changed - however sensitively - by the social distancing measures we will have to put in place. Still others will feel horribly sad that, because they are shielding, they will be unable to come into church. There will be a range of other feelings, too.

Please be assured of my prayers at this time, however you feel. Please talk to me if that would help. Please know that there is no single 'right way' to respond to this decision: if it will help you to come to church, please come; if it will be better for you to stay away, please do that, with our love and prayers. Simply, do what feels right to you, what will help you most, at this already challenging time.

There is now quite a lot of practical work to be done to get church ready for opening; we need to:

- remove some items out of the areas of church which will be open to the public;
- clean church thoroughly;
- order the goods we will need to put social distancing in place and then put in the infrastructure to support these, and
- train our volunteers and make a film so that those coming to pray will know what to expect.

All of this means that we don't anticipate being ready to open before **Saturday 27th June** and then, only once a week, for two hours.

In the pew sheet below, there are requests for two teams to help us next week with some of the set up. Because of Government advice, and as per a previous email from me,

these volunteers will need to be under 70 years of age. Thank you to those of you who are over this age, or who are shielding for health reasons, who have offered to help with prayer support, with mending kneelers or laundering soft furnishings. I will be in touch with all of those volunteers - and those who have offered to steward church - next week.

In the meantime, please do be assured, as ever, of my love and prayers for each of you. I think reopening church for private prayer is an important step for us and one which, if taken carefully, might be a blessing to many in our towns and villages. Please pray with me that this would be so.

With love

Mary

Contact Details

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- ◆ Buildings Team:
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- ◆ St Helen's website:
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- ◆ Flagstaff Team website:
www.flagstaff.org.uk
- ◆ Facebook:
St Helen's Ashby de la Zouch
- ◆ Twitter:
@sthelensashby

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

The bereaved:

Please pray for the family and friends of Jane Wise, and anyone known to you who is bereaved.

Please pray for all families for whom the funerals of their loved ones have taken place during this difficult time, including:

- ◆ Sheelagh Judge
- ◆ Roy Hodges
- ◆ Mykola Kuyszsin
- ◆ Hazel Farmer
- ◆ David Robert Smith
- ◆ Dorothy Wragg
- ◆ Marie Bowman
- ◆ Bill Woodward
- ◆ Olive Pointon
- ◆ Sheila Wood
- ◆ Henry Tagg
- ◆ June Stapleton
- ◆ Judith Graves
- ◆ Ann Wheatley
- ◆ Albert Meakin
- ◆ Christopher McVickers
- ◆ Dennis Grainger
- ◆ Graham Howells
- ◆ Jane Wise
- ◆ Florence Hannah James
- ◆ David Garrett

And for the families awaiting the funerals of loved ones

In love, we remember those whose anniversary of death falls at this time, and pray for their families and friends:

- ◆ Jessie Evans
- ◆ Leonard Henry Matthews
- ◆ Albert 'Sam' Whitlock
- ◆ Richard Anthony Marlow
- ◆ Agnes Lilian Hall
- ◆ Ethel Anne Watson
- ◆ Percy Johnson
- ◆ George Leonard Watson

The sick, disabled or housebound:

Pray for ...

- ◆ Tia Rose Brownlow
 - ◆ Val Dawson
 - ◆ Margaret Stalker
 - ◆ Carole Youles
- ...& others known to you

◆ St Helen's Prayer Chain requests:

Judith Lewis on 01530 564204
or email jchjcl@gmail.com

◆ Notice Sheet Prayer requests:

To Jill Chapman on 07725 519453
stheleansashby@gmail.com

NOTICES

Setting up church to reopen for private prayer

We need two teams of six people this week, please, to help us ready church for private prayer.

Team One

- Tuesday 10am to midday;
- Team leader - Mary;
- Task - cleaning (dusting, sweeping, hoovering)
- If you could be one of the five people Mary needs to work with her please email her at revmarygregory@aol.co.uk

Team Two

- Friday 10am to midday;
- Team leader - Stewart;
- Task - putting up the pew end candlesticks around which we will later tie attractive cord to mark off the pews which will be out of use in support of our social distancing measures

- If you could be one of the five people Stewart needs to work with him please email him at stewb_1@hotmail.com

Please be aware that during this time of pandemic, usual rotas of cleaners and flower arrangers are suspended. We look forward to the time when your valued service of our community can resume.

Giving

We have added a function to the St Helen's Church website whereby monetary giving is now possible.

To do this go to the website

<https://www.sthelensashby.net/> where you'll find 'Giving' is one of the options on the drop down menu on the 'Church Life' tab. John Backman has written about our church's approach to giving, and you can click on '[donation here](#)'

June's parish magazine

This month's edition of the magazine, including Mary's letter, reflections on 'lockdown' from various members of the congregation, photos of some highlights, and lowlights of the last month's services, and much, much more, is available on the St Helen's Church website:

https://www.sthelensashby.net/Groups/339405/Parish_Magazine.aspx

Flag of Joy

In [Prayer for the Day on 4th June](#) Andy Smith invited us to create a 'Flag of Joy', so that when we gather together once more in the future we have bunting to tell our stories.

Some flags are now displayed on our Facebook page but it's not too late to send in yours - Please email it to Jill Chapman at

jill.chapman12@btopenworld.com

What's happening in the St Helen's Community Heritage Centre this week?

Don't forget to check in with the Heritage Centre's Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/sthelensheritage/> or on their page on the St Helen's Church website - <https://www.sthelensashby.net/Groups/327486/Heritage.aspx>