

Opening of Parish Buildings

The PCC and Rector of St Faith's Havant with St Nicholas Langstone

**Statement of the PCC regarding the opening of parish buildings,
and the resumption of public worship.**

The Headlines:

- 1) We aim to carefully open St Faith's church for private prayer only from Tuesday 14th July.**
- 2) There are no firm plans to re-open other parish buildings yet, but we're working towards it.**

Details:

Our very reluctant decision to close our parish's public buildings was taken in line with Government directives, but primarily with the health and wellbeing of our parishioners, visitors, volunteers and staff in mind. Since the Government has given permission for buildings to re-open (with extra safety-measures in place) we have, of course, been carefully considering when the time would be right for our buildings. We are mindful that some other churches have already opened their doors for private prayer, and indeed that a small number (including our Cathedral) are making provision for limited public worship from this Sunday (5th July). However, we note that few such churches are in such a public position as St Faith's - so close to a major commercial district. The risk of infection being spread by visitors to such a 'destination-shopping' area is much greater than to churches which are in residential areas.

We are also mindful of the many restrictions which the Government has (rightly in our view) placed around the potential opening of church buildings. These include

- rigorous health & safety procedures (including complete sanitisation or 72 hour closures between openings)
- registration of visitors for 'track and trace' purposes,
- social distancing requirements,
- discouragement of the attendance of people over the age of 70 (or in other high risk groups)
- prohibitions on singing

- prohibition on social gathering
- the probability of having to administer advance bookings for attendance

Finally, we are mindful that (as both the Government and the World Health Authority constantly remind us) the present pandemic is not over. Our primary concern remains the health and wellbeing of all church building users (alongside our ever-continuing ministry of helping people to worship God and explore faith in new and creative ways). At the same time, we remain conscious of the immense value, to some people, of having such an ancient, beautiful and prayer-soaked space in which to seek God.

Opening St Faith's for Private Prayer

With all these thoughts in mind, we wish to announce that it is our current intention to open St Faith's for private prayer only with effect from Tuesday 14th July, subject to any significant increase in the Hampshire and Portsmouth infection rates between now and then. We will initially open St Faith's church building (only) on the following times and days, with rigorous health and safety procedures (and trained staff) in place:

Tuesdays from 14 July: Midday to 2pm

Fridays from 17 July: 10am to Midday

(The gap between these days allows sufficient time for any residual virus - after sanitisation - to decay.)

We will review the hours of opening in the light of experience gained about how popular these opportunities prove to be.

Other parish buildings?

- There are currently no plans to open St Nicholas Chapel - which is (in our view) too small a space to be able to offer appropriate social distancing measures. However, we may soon be able to livestream a service from there.
- There are currently no firm plans to open the Pallant Centre or St Faith's Shop - though we continue to work towards opening both as soon as we feel we responsibly can.

Resumption of Public Worship?

We have decided to continue worshipping online-only, for the time-

being. We presently judge that the severe restrictions imposed on public worship mean that anything we might offer would be almost unrecognisable to our normal worshipping members. Such restrictions include:

- Social distancing (which will severely limit congregation sizes).
- The lack of singing,
- The expectation of 'short' services,
- The expectation of masks (on clergy at least),
- The prohibition on post-service social gatherings,
- The active discouragement of over-70s (and other high health-risk groups) from attending.

All these factors would, in our view, combine to form a very unsatisfactory worshipping experience, which would be likely to exclude many of our members.

We also judge that any such service would likely be less conducive to the act of worshipping God than the online services we currently provide.

We have, of course, considered whether to live-stream short, said, services only attended by under-70s, but we do not presently feel comfortable about systematically excluding a large percentage of our membership.

We will review this decision continuously, not least in response to public comment and feedback, and the current scientific advice. We are especially conscious of the fact that some worshippers feel most keenly the lack of communion in physical form.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

We thank all parishioners, visitors, friends and members for your ongoing support and prayers. We urge the whole community to keep on caring for one another, especially those most affected by the current economic challenges, the loss of loved ones, and those on the front-line of keeping our community going.

Do continue to worship and pray with us via our online services, on Facebook and Zoom, details of which can be found in the weekly Corona Chronicle.

Canon Tom Kennar, on behalf of the PCC

2nd July 2020