

Phased re-opening of our churches

Rebecca Bretherton writes:

At the end of May, Bishop Alan asked me to coordinate the planning for the phased reopening of our church in March. To do this, I have been working with the parish committee and am supported by Fr Jeffrey. Now I can update everyone with our progress.

At the beginning of June, we visited the church to explore the possibilities and to understand the limitations caused by the social distancing rules. This, together with guidance from the diocese, allowed the committee to meet by 'zoom' to discuss our options and to make informed decisions. We made the disappointing but realistic decision that the task of re-opening with the current restrictions would be too onerous for a small band of volunteers to manage and sustain for several weeks. Bishop Alan has accepted our decision and asked me to pass on his thanks for everyone who has been doing various things for the parish and to pass on his prayers for us all.

Our committee continues to review the situation. I am speaking to other parishes. Many have made similar decisions. As I write this, there is news that the national risk level has lowered to Level 3. We do not know what this will mean for us but we have to be realistic about what is possible here. Thank you to everyone who has offered help. There will be a job for you when the time comes.

Meanwhile, some churches near us are open for restricted hours for individual prayer. We are still asked to stay safe and remain local but it good to know that the Peterborough parishes, Whittlesey/Ramsey and Wisbech have all published opening times. As they are all dependent on volunteer teams, I recommend that you check their websites before making a trip. What they are doing this week may be different next week. Another source of information about open churches is the diocesan website: rcdea.org.uk

Live-stream Sunday Masses and other online options continue to be provided by other parishes. In March, we are increasing the number of online prayer opportunities. We had a successful zoom Evening Prayer for the Feast of the Sacred Heart on Friday evening. We plan a fortnightly Gospel Sharing group and more Evening Prayer liturgies. These give us the chance to meet and pray together as the Body of Jesus Christ.