



“where the river flows everything will live”

Following the 19th July: Living with Covid and living in comm-UNITY with each other...

As Vicar of Tidenham and Priest-in-Charge of the Parishes of St Briavels with Hewelsfield and Brockweir responsibility lies with me in collaboration with others to outline what happens in our church buildings and activities following the removal of all Government restrictions on the 19 July. As church / community we must assess the best course of action taking into account ongoing warnings related to Covid infections, hospital admissions and the need to protect the vulnerable, alongside the need to restore people's freedoms.

For the time being the following measures will continue to be implemented in our church buildings and activities:

- 1. Face Coverings?** Yes, strongly encouraged particularly for bigger groups.
- 2. Hand Hygiene?** Yes, on entry to our church buildings.
- 3. Social Distancing Required?** Yes – people may sit in bubbles.
- 4. Congregational Singing?** Yes, but with face coverings worn.
- 5. Holy Communion?** Yes, in one kind to people in their seats with strict hygiene.
- 6. Pre bookings?** No pre booking required except for baptisms, weddings and funerals.
- 7. Midweek Holy Communion?** Yes, an even safer gathering especially for those feeling most vulnerable.
- 8. Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals?** Yes, with masks and distancing in bubbles.
- 9. Socialising and drinks/food?** Yes, BUT must be hygienic, remaining distanced and outside if possible.
- 10. Use of the Church Buildings by Community Groups?** Yes, with distancing, hand gel and face coverings.

There will be differing views on whether having these measures and others are appropriate (it reminds me of Brexit). Yet, as community we MUST live well alongside one another and manage the tension of different views of risk and responsibility where one person's idea of personal responsibility with Covid may be another person's idea of stupidity!

A Christian community should set a good example of this. Within the Christian faith and a life lived in the Spirit of God we find the virtues of love, patience, humility, kindness and gentleness equip us to handle situations of relational tension and disagreement, and even conflict. The Bible has loads of helpful teaching including...

“all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:8-9

“avoid quarrelling.. be gentle, and... show every courtesy to everyone.” Titus 3:2

“encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” 1 Thessalonians 5:14

“As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other...” Col 3:12-13

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

May we live life together in the flow of God's love! The Lord bless you and keep you/us in his love.

David

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