

**From Edward:**

'The Rule of Six' is now upon us: We woke up on Wednesday morning to learn that from this coming Monday we will be unable to gather socially in groups of more than six. And with this news two things happened - two patterns of behaviour with which we're now unfortunately very used to.

One reaction was blind confusion: What does this mean? Can we still meet for services? What about our Bible Study, or our Lunch Clubs, or our Hall Hirers, or Foam Parties? Do we have to cancel everything? What if we sit near our friends in the pub pretend not to know them?

The good news for us as a church is that clarification came swiftly with the Archbishop of Canterbury tweeting:

*'After contact with Government we hear that there is no change to guidance on places of worship. Worship is the work of God - not a social gathering - and gives strength to love and serve.'*

If you want to interpret this to mean that there is nothing sociable about attending services then fair enough, but the ultimate upshot is that the new rule **will not bring any additional restrictions to acts of worship** and further guidance forwarded from the Archdeacon's office shows that **the vast majority of activities across the Team Ministry, including the activities of our hall hirers fall into categories which are exempt from the rule of six...** Big sighs of relief all round!

The other response I've observed is far more toxic response: Mudslinging. 'Its because of all those young people having raves' - is one line I've heard... But then again 'It's because those old people don't think the rules apply to them' has also been floating around and it highlights quite a worrying trend in attitude: The assumption that (a) a specific group's behaviour has *caused* this restriction and (b) whichever group is responsible, *it wasn't us*.

This need to point the finger is something I've found very worrying: As I said in a sermon last year, when we point the finger we find three pointing back at ourselves. We could sit and find reasons to claim the rules are 'meant for someone else' but by doing so we're also trying to absolve ourselves (usually inaccurately) of any duty to comply with them - so let's assume for the sake of argument, that social distancing restrictions *are meant for all of us*, whether 'boomer', 'millennial' or anything else. A *global* pandemic, by its nature affects *everyone* and to get out of the woods we must walk the path together (...figuratively, not literally, because that would be a group of more than six!). Stay safe!

Edward

**Sunday Services:** Holy Communion 8am & 10am, Evening Prayer 3pm.  
(Children's activity bags will be available for use at the 10am service)

**Holy Cross Day:** A video message from Edward for *Holy Cross Day* (14<sup>th</sup> September) will be available via our website from Monday.

**Harvest Festival:** Our next Family Communion will be the annual Harvest Festival on the 4<sup>th</sup> October. This occasion will see the reopening of our Foodbank Donation Point. Please see future emails for the 'Shopping List' of goods currently needed by the Bexley Foodbank.

**APCM:** We will be holding our Annual Parochial Church Meeting after the 10am service on **Sunday October 11<sup>th</sup>**. Social distancing rules will apply. This will be an important step on our journey out of lockdown as a church, with a chance to celebrate all that our church has to be thankful for and look forward to the future of our life and ministry together. In order to participate you will need to be on the electoral roll. If you are not already a member, please see the attached form which includes criteria for eligibility. If you are unsure whether you are on the electoral roll or have any further questions then please email Edward.

**Parish Office:** Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September, 7pm-8pm in the hall. This is usually the first stop for booking Baptisms and Weddings at St John's. We are very grateful to our parish clerk, Susan Jones for her hard work in this area of the church's ministry.

**Midweek:** As we consider how best to reinstate our midweek Eucharist Services across the Team, a weekly Bible Study focusing on the *Book of Nehemiah* is being held at St Mary's on Wednesday mornings throughout September. For more details see the Bexley Team News and let Rev'd Clive Wood know if you hope to attend.

**Church Open:** St John's is open on Sundays from 8am-3.30pm, with services at 8am, 10am and 3pm. Our capacity is limited and social distancing measures are in place. Please read them carefully before you enter the building (a copy is attached to this email), and note that you will be expected to bring a facemask and a pen for completing the Track & Trace form. Please see the Bexley Team News for opening arrangements at our sister churches.

**Evening Prayer:** Whilst we have endeavoured to produce orders of service that can be used as safely as possible, we would encourage those who can to download the Church of England's *Daily Prayer* app and change the settings to 'Traditional' in order to follow the service when attending Evening Prayer. If you wish to join in prayer from home you can find the services in the Book of Common Prayer, via the Daily Prayer App, or through the [Church of England's Website](#).

**Volunteers Needed:** We are incredibly grateful to those who have stepped forward to assist with supervising the church during opening hours. If you would like to join this rota please email Edward ([fr.edwardbarlow@gmail.com](mailto:fr.edwardbarlow@gmail.com)). Please do not volunteer if you are currently shielding.

**Needing support?:** The current global situation is a cause of anxiety and worry for many of us. If you need someone to talk to, spiritual support, or if you are looking for assistance with shopping or collecting medication please contact Edward at [fr.edwardbarlow@gmail.com](mailto:fr.edwardbarlow@gmail.com) or call 01322521786.

**Sermon:** Edward's sermons are available [here](#) from Sunday Morning. This week's sermon from the Family Service is entitled 'Sorry Seems to Be The Hardest Word'.

**Giving:** St John's continues to need your support financially throughout the current emergency. If you wish to give regularly please use the standing order form attached to this email or for a one off giving please use our [JustGiving Page](#). If you have a social media presence please also help us out by sharing this link.

**EasyFundraising:** If you're shopping online please remember you can give to St. John's by shopping via [our Easy Fundraising page](#). There is also a link from our website.

**Social Media:** Remember you can engage with us on Facebook (*/stjohnsbexley*) and Twitter (*@stjohnsbexley*).

**Talkline:** If you're feeling lonely, isolated, stressed or anxious *Counselling Matters Bexley's* new *Talkline* offers free, non-judgemental counselling and support and can also give you information on other relevant services. Freephone: 08000472600 or email [mail@cmbtalk.org](mailto:mail@cmbtalk.org). The line is open from 5pm-9pm every week day and 9am-9pm on weekends and bank holidays.

**Memory Cafe:** For anyone in Bexley Borough living with dementia and those who care for them, to offer friendship and support, the *Christ Church Erith Memory Cafe* will take place over Zoom on Thursdays from 10.45am-11.45am. For access details please contact Christchurch Erith Project Worker Jacki Clement at [cceprojectworker@hotmail.com](mailto:cceprojectworker@hotmail.com).

**Rochester Cathedral:** Rochester Cathedral celebrating Choral Evensong [via their website](#), using material produced prior to lockdown. Please also see the Cathedral website for details about the Cathedral's reopening plans.

**Prayers for use during the Coronavirus Outbreak:** The Church of England has produced a booklet of prayers to aid devotions at home during the current crisis. It is available [here](#), along with other prayer resources and advice (scroll down the webpage for the booklet).

**Daily Hope:** The Archbishop of Canterbury has launched a free national phonenumber with hymns, reflections and prayers to enable worship from home throughout the lockdown. Details are available [here](#) and you may wish to pass the information on to those you know who cannot access resources online.

**Domestic Abuse:** As you will have heard, the current situation has seen an unpleasant increase in incidences of Domestic Abuse. Bishop Simon has commended recent advice issued by the national church in response to this and details can be found [here](#)

**Bexley Team News:** The weekly newsletter connecting us with our sister churches across the Bexley Team is attached to this email.

**Toddler Church Fun!:** Toddler Church Activities from the past four months are still available on our website. We wish all our Toddler Church members a happy and safe Summer.

**Devotional Pattern:** Readings for September with suggested hymns, prayer intentions and questions to consider are attached to this email.

**Face coverings:** Please be aware that it is a requirement that face coverings must be worn in places of worship unless you have a legitimate exemption. Thank you for your cooperation.

### **This Week Please Pray For:**

...Those returning to school.  
...Our returning hall hirers.  
...The healing of our damaged world.  
...all currently suffering with Covid-19.

...all are who continuing to shield or self-isolate.

...the sick in need of our prayers, Margaret Quick, Gladys Verran, Amy Jones, Barbara, Mavis Johnson, Samantha Pout, Ray Mace, Marie Berry, Maggie Rankine, Ann Harlow, Joyce Forrest, Dorothy Samuel, John Beddison, David Watkins, Nicola Johns and any others known to you.

...the recently departed, Percy Hicks, Don Hunt.

....those whose anniversaries fall at this time, Wilfred Nock, Olive Barnett, David de Carle, Bunty de Carle, Geoffrey Palmer, Thomas Masters, Janet Gonda, John Burke, Bertram Sanger

*Lord, at this time of pandemic,  
Let us foster respect and solidarity with others,  
Especially those who are weak or poor.  
Let us remain calm and ignore unsubstantiated rumours.  
Let us take advantage of living together as a family.  
Let us attend to moments of prayer.  
Let us cultivate responsibility, patience and hope.  
Amen*

*(Prayer adapted from Rodolfo Valenzuela Núñez; Roman Catholic Bishop of LaVerapaz, Guatemala)*

**Our Safeguarding Statement can be read at**  
<http://www.stjohnsbexley.org/safeguardingstatement.html>

If you or someone you are concerned about is in immediate danger, please call the police on 999

<https://bexleywomensaid.org.uk/>

<https://mensadviceline.org.uk/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19>

