

THE STILTON GROUP OF CHURCHES

STILTON FOLKSWORTH MORBORNE HADDON ELTON

15th March 2021

Dear Friends

I am pleased to tell you we are returning to public worship in our Group from 28th March, which is Palm Sunday. I hope you are as excited to hear that as I am, and I would like to explain what will happen and why, as well as outline how we need to take reasonable precautions to prevent any inadvertent spreading of the virus. As we get closer to the day when restrictions are lifted, if anything, this makes it even more clear how important it is for us all to stay safe and keep others safe too.

How did we decide what our service provision would be?

There is no hard and fast rule or national instruction to follow that guides the decision, but there are principles that point us in the right direction;

- We want to open our church buildings for Easter now the risk of infection is reducing. Churches across our deanery are planning the same thing.
- We want to minimise potential risks in doing so by not opening everywhere all the time. Instead, we will make sure worship is held in all our villages during the month.
- We are very aware that many of us have not been able to see loved ones for some time or take many or any holidays for over a year. This Spring and Summer will be an important time to do this. Everyone, including our church leaders, need time to catch up on holidays and visit friends and family, so it's important we don't over-commit ourselves, even as restrictions relax.
- We will have restrictions placed on our worship for some time yet and cannot guarantee that current published dates for relaxing rules will be fulfilled. It is better for us to be cautious with what is possible for now.

We are perhaps all eager for life to get back to normal, but we do need to exercise some patience in the short term so we look after one another in every sense. It's also true that a cautious approach now is easier to build on than to do too much and have to cut back later.

Easter Services

The opportunity to open our churches has happened just in time for Easter. This is wonderful news! We will be offering the following services for the Easter season;

Palm Sunday Celebration

9.45am at Folksworth

11.15am at Haddon

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday

These will be online only through our youtube channel. Those receiving posted worship packs will receive resources for Holy Week.

Easter Sunday

9.30am at Elton	Easter Celebration with Holy Communion
9.45am at Folksworth	Open Air Service in the churchyard
11.15am at Haddon	Open Air Service in the churchyard
11.15am at Stilton	Easter Celebration with Holy Communion
3.00pm at Morborne	Open Air Service in the churchyard

Worship from 11th April

From 11th, we will follow the monthly rota as described in the separate sheet enclosed with this letter. Our current expectation is that this rota will be in place to the end of August.

**Please note that, from 11th April to the end of August,
all morning services will be at the new time of 10.30am.**

Since we have agreed to limited opening until the end of August, we believe it is a long enough period for us to choose a slightly more amenable time for our services. Our previous early and late morning times were essential to enable service leaders time to commute between churches, but this will not be necessary before September. During this time, we will have a rule that no one will take more than one service on a Sunday morning, so the potential for transmission between congregations is eliminated. I should also say that this

time affects services to the end of August to fit a specific circumstance, and is not a permanent change.

What are the 'Rules' for attending worship in church?

It is vitally important that we do what we can to keep everyone safe. As we know, even those who have been vaccinated can carry the virus, and not all in our congregations have been vaccinated or will be soon. We are still being advised to act as if we have Covid, which is a clear enough message, so please make sure you do the following;

- When you come to church, please do not stop to talk either at the entrance or inside church in the aisle. The same is true after the service.
- Please go directly to your seat. At the end of the service, churches should be vacated by those closest to the door leaving first.
- Please always wear a facemask (apart from those who are known exceptions).
- Please do not sing to the music however much you want to. Tests have shown this is a recognised way of spreading the virus.
- Please make sure you use sanitizer on the way in and out of church.
- For a communion service, you are not obliged to receive the wafer in order to attend. At present, we are only able to distribute the wafer.
- You will need to be willing to provide name and phone number each time you attend to assist with contact tracing.

One final request...

At times, when we have opened in the last year, our church capacity was very close to being exceeded. In the past, we have encouraged people to travel to churches when their own is not open. We are now requesting that everyone only attends the church they normally go to, rather than attending every week.

It is still possible that there will be another surge in infections, so keeping to these rules will mean we have done everything in our power to remain safe together. The above practice needs to be followed until further notice and we are not expecting much change at least until national restrictions are ended.

I don't know about you, but I can't wait!

Online Worship

The team has worked incredibly hard to make sure there is fresh and engaging worship on our youtube channel each Sunday. Creating these services, which always involve a variety of contributors, is a very time consuming process and is difficult to do when we are also meeting publicly.

Most likely from April 11th we will record our public worship and post the service later on a Sunday for those who are unable to come to church. If you are able, please keep an eye out for them.

If there is anything you are unclear on, then please do not hesitate to contact either me or one of your church wardens.

Yours In Christ

Richard