

**Rev'd Sarah Edmonds**  
Rector of Shipston, Tidmington, Honington & Idlicote,  
Area Dean of Shipston  
The Rectory, 8 Glen Close, Shipston on Stour, CV36 4ED  
sarah\_edmonds@btconnect.com 01608 661210

July 6<sup>th</sup> 2020

Dear friends,

It has been a few weeks since I last wrote to you and much has changed in that time. We've seen lockdown easing slightly, shops opening and restrictions on meeting others reducing.

You will probably have heard that we are now allowed to open our churches for private prayer and, since yesterday, for services too. We have to work hard to make sure that this is safe in each instance and so we are working out what might be possible in each church and when we might re open. The answer will be different for each of our church buildings.

It's important to realise that whenever you come into church – whether for private prayer or for a service – it will look very different from normal. You will need to sanitise your hands on entry and exit and maintain social distancing at all times. In some buildings, areas are cordoned off for safety reasons.

## **OPENING FOR PRIVATE PRAYER**

**Tidmington Church** is open each day, unsupervised. Signs will direct you to what you need to do to stay safe. There are no prayer books or Bibles available for you to use, so please bring your own if you would like to. You will need to safely clean the door handle as you leave, and instructions are there for you to follow

**St Edmund's Shipston** is open on Mondays from 10-12 and Thursdays from 1-3. Only the Lady Chapel is available for private prayer and you must enter through the door to the right of the church, through the gate to the churchyard. Someone will be present at all times to greet you.

**St James' Idlicote** is open from 12<sup>th</sup> July on Sundays from 2-4pm and Thursdays after the morning service (see below) until noon. Some pews are cordoned off, hand sanitiser is available and signs to tell you what to do to keep safe. Again, if you would like to use a prayer book or Bible you will need to bring your own.

**All Saints' Honington** is likely to open on Mondays after Morning Prayer and we will confirm this when the risk assessment is in place.

## OPENING FOR SERVICES

Meeting together for worship is an important part of our faith. Since lockdown, our churches have been meeting online but we know that not everyone has been able to come to our Zoom services. We're therefore really pleased that we can at last have some services again in our buildings.

However, these services will be very different. This is what will happen:

- When you arrive, you may be asked to queue at a safe distance before you can go in.
- Everyone will need to sanitise their hands and you will be asked for your name and contact details, for the government's track and trace system. We will only keep these details for 21 days and they will only be used in the event of someone who comes to church contracting COVID19.
- We will need to sit in every other pew, and a service sheet may be there for you to use. You must take this away with you.
- We aren't allowed to sing, and we are asked that any spoken responses are said quietly so that the risk of transmission is reduced
- Services will be shorter than normal and at the end you will need to leave one pew at a time, when asked by a sidesperson
- At the moment we can't offer refreshments after the service, and you will need to leave the building straight away. If you want to chat, you must do so at a safe distance from friends, away from the church door.
- In our communion services, you will be offered just the bread. Directions will be given in each place to help you keep safe. The priest will wear a mask and visor for parts of the service, and will sanitise her hands regularly.
- There will be no toys or books available for children, and they will need to sit in a pew with their carer.
- To keep everyone safe, you are encouraged to consider wearing a face mask. Our welcomers and worship leaders will be doing so.

**Idlicote Church** will be holding a service of Morning Prayer every Thursday from 16<sup>th</sup> July at 9.45am. After this the church will remain open for private prayer until noon. Please do join us. Everyone is welcome whether you live in Idlicote or not.

**St Edmund's Church** will be holding its Wednesday Communion Service from 15<sup>th</sup> July at 10am. For the first week, please contact Hilary Kelly (662491) if you would like to come, so that we know numbers. If you have children, please contact Revd Sarah for a chat first.

This may feel very strange – and in some ways it is – but we will still be smiling and welcoming and are looking forward to seeing you if you would like to join us. You might not be ready to come back yet and that's fine too. We will carry on resourcing you as much as we can. Gradually we hope to get back to a pattern of services and we will be in touch regularly to let you know about that.

Finally, if you have any questions or would like to chat, please do get in touch.

Every blessing, Sarah