

1st June 2020

Good morning everyone, I hope you had a good weekend.

At the end of last week I, along with all the clergy in the Diocese, received this e-mail from Bishop Peter.

Dear Tom,

Many of us were expecting to hear the Prime Minister say something about places of worship, alongside shops and parks, in his statement on Thursday evening regarding the easing of lockdown restrictions. On scientific advice, the Government has however, decided church and other faith buildings must remain shut to the public until at least 4 July, which is targeted as the next milestone for easing restrictions beyond the current announcements.

I know that, like me, a lot of people will feel disappointed and frustrated by that. While, of course, the Church is not a building, for many people our sacred spaces are incredibly significant in their lives and faith as well as being at the centre of community life, especially at times of deep need as at present.

The Church of England bishops, led by the Bishop of London in this case, continue to work with the Government to ensure that we can begin to reopen our places of worship in a phased way as soon as it is deemed safe and practical to do so. Active planning is in process to that end, and detailed advice is being developed to help local churches plan for the practical challenges of enabling opening for individual prayer, weddings, funerals and other important rites to take place and then, in due course, a resumption of public worship services.

So, hard as it is, I continue to ask for your patience and co-operation as we await further announcements during the course of June.

+ Peter Bishop of Barking and Acting Bishop of Chelmsford.

It is indeed a disappointment to many that our buildings will not be opening just yet but we do have much to be grateful for. As Bishop Peter points out, the Church is not the building but the people and

we have proved, over the last few weeks and in some very significant ways, that the Church is still very present and active in our communities. We must prayerfully continue to do all that we can to minister Jesus to each other and those around us and if that means not being able to come back to our

beloved sacred space as soon as we would wish, then so be it. Our lovely and significant building will still

be there when we are able to meet together again and when the time is right, and in an appropriate manner,

we will be able to come together as the family of God.

PS. I have sent a card to Anthony to say how much we missed his singing in church and that we look forward to seeing him when we are allowed back.

Tom

Sent by Canon Tom Page
Vicar: Ascension with All Saints
Chelmsford
(AwAS)