

# All Saints Church

Hampreston & Stapehill

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Church Member

This evening, the joint Standing Committees of St Mary's Ferndown and All Saints Hampreston & Stapehill met to talk about whether we should continue with in-person services during this national lockdown.

The Government provision is that churches are able to meet for communal worship. However, the national church has asked the local church to decide whether they feel that meeting is right in each different context.

We have come to the difficult decision that we should suspend in-person church services for the time being. This decision was not taken lightly but prayerfully, and we have tried to consider all the different factors. Gathering together as church is such a vitally important aspect of our lives as Christians. We all benefit from it, and have missed it greatly when we haven't been able to meet. The Church is the Body of Christ, and it is important that we are connected! That said, we feel that this is the most loving and responsible course of action at this stage of this international crisis.

We want to assure you that the decision was not taken out of fear. We believe that Jesus is Lord – He is Sovereign over all our circumstances – He was not taken by surprise by a new lockdown. As children of God, our hope is in Him, and we look to Him to help us navigate these times with love, faith and courage.

It is also important to note that the church is not closed! As with previous lockdowns, we will continue to serve our church family, reaching out to one another in love, and to serve our communities in whatever way we can. If you need help of any kind, please do not hesitate to be in touch with us either directly or through Helen (All Saints - 07419 907343) or the Church Office (St Mary's – 01202 897087).

We do believe that there are many opportunities for us to grow in these days. Although we love our times of gathering, we have always said that being a follower of Jesus is about far more than just coming to Church on a Thursday or Sunday. We are called to whole-life discipleship! This is an opportunity for us to put this into practice. What daily habits might we put in place to help us to grow in Christ-likeness, and to stoke the fires of our love for God? How might we emulate Mary, choosing what is best, sitting at the feet of Jesus? What does it look like to be Good News and reach out to others with the hope that Jesus brings?

Of course, we are still providing on-line services, accessible through our websites, Facebook and YouTube, and we encourage you to make accessing these a priority each

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week, if you are able. If you can watch on a Sunday morning, then there is a sense in which we feel more together, as it is great to see that our brothers and sisters are connecting. If you are not able to join us online, why not commit to spending a significant time in prayer, at 10.45 when the service airs? Again, we will then experience being together in spirit, if not in person. If you are not confident in using technology to access our online services, please do get in touch and we will happily talk you through the process. We will also be sending weekly mailings to those who are not online, with Daily Words of Encouragement and sermon notes.

If you are not already in a life group/home group, now would be a great time to join! Do speak to us (Patches for St Mary's groups, or Sarah for All Saints groups) if you are interested. Obviously groups are unable to meet in person for now, but many are connecting via Zoom, or members are in regular contact.

To finish with, here is some encouragement from Psalm 27: 13, 14

"I remain confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD."

Every blessing

Sarah and Patches

Rev. Sarah Pix (Team Rector– 01202 890798)

Rev. Patches Chabala (Team Vicar – 01202 895099)

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