

3 September 2021

Dear St Michael's,

I hope you have all managed to enjoy the summer holidays in the best possible way despite the circumstances. As you are all aware, things are still very uncertain and we are not entering into September with a usual 'back to business' feel. There is a lot of uncertainty around and there are many people who still feel unsure about how their lives are going to be over the coming months.

We are trying to offer the best possible provision in the church life but do so with a sense of caution and consideration, particularly for those who feel vulnerable.

When we meet together on Sunday 5th September, I am going to suggest the following:

1. Face mask wearing will be optional but we would encourage people to still wear them as they walk around the church.
2. The seating will be closer together but will not be back to the arrangement that we had before Covid.
3. People will NOT need to pre-book their attendance.
4. We will sing the first and last songs (with or without masks??) and remain seated and listen, hum the songs we have after the confession. These tend to be more reflective/prayerful songs.
5. We will serve refreshments outside in the garden and will encourage people to congregate there and not remain inside.
6. Please do not attend if you feel unwell or have had a positive test.

The situation will be reviewed at the PCC on Sept 27th.

I know this is difficult but again ask for your patience and forbearance.

As we approach this next season, can I encourage you with two thoughts? The first is one of hope. During the summer we had the great news of the safe arrival of Ruthie Grace Kophamel - life goes on! That is the same in the church. God has not, and will not stop his work of transformation within us, despite the circumstances. The Bible and history tells us that in times of difficulty, persecution, need and even death, the Spirit of God is still at work.

The second is one of appreciation. It is not always good to compare ourselves to others, but it is helpful to remind ourselves of the simple blessings that we have. We have seen the traumatic events that have quickly unfolded in Afghanistan and our hearts go out to the people there. Though we continue to feel that life is hard/depressing/uncertain, it is not as traumatic as what some people in the world are facing, and for that we need to give thanks.

So I look forward to welcoming you all back in the coming weeks and equally look forward to all that God wants to do within the people of St Michael's.

Love and Prayers,

Pete