

Dear Parishioners,

We hope you and yours are keeping well.

A huge thank you to everyone who responded to our recent survey asking if you wished the PCC to complete the Church in Wales Amber Risk Assessment to see if St Barnabas could be reopened.

To read more about the Church in Wales Coronavirus Guidance which includes the Risk Assessment Template (which must be met before a church can reopen) - <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>

We told you that we would be holding a PCC shortly after the closing date and that we would inform you of the outcome.

So, from 80 individuals contacted we have had responses from 56 – that's a response rate of 70% which some political parties would be delighted with!

3 Questions were asked;

1. If we reopen St. Barnabas Church would you be happy to return?

56 responses – 7 individuals (13%) said YES, 49 individuals (88%) said NO

Note: Of the 7 individuals, none are Clergy, Wardens or Lay Readers. 2 are PCC members

2. Would you prefer to wait a little longer before reopening?

56 responses – 50 individuals (89%) said YES, 6 individuals (11%) said NO

3. Are you willing to put your name forward to be part of our team to enable us to adhere to government and church guidelines concerning stewarding and cleaning?

56 responses – 6 individuals (11%) said YES, 50 individuals (89%) said NO

Note: Of the 6 individuals, none are Clergy, Wardens or Lay Readers. 2 are PCC members

We put these details to the Archdeacon, The Venerable Jonathan B Davies, who is responsible for signing off the Church in Wales Amber Risk Assessment - without this we cannot reopen. His response was;

"In being asked for feedback, and in light of the results of the questionnaire you shared, I would say that the response not to re-open at this time is the decision which the PCC should arrive at. Such a majority cannot be ignored.

The guidelines state that the re-opening of a church building is the responsibility of the local trustee body:

'The local trustee body (PCC) responsible for each place of worship has a legal responsibility to do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent people from coming to harm from Covid-19.'

In other words, following your own assessment and given the results of the questionnaire, I would say that the PCC has a legal responsibility to those who do not want St Barnabas to re-open at this time. They have given you a clear message that for a variety of reasons now is not the right time to re-open for communal worship . The PCC should take the lead from the majority not the minority. Given this information, I would be unable to sign off a Risk Assessment at this time."

We have held our PCC meeting on Monday 10th August and taking all the above into account it was voted 10 to 0 (with 1 abstention) that we should not open St Barnabas for any reason (including Private Prayer) until we successfully pass the Church in Wales Green Risk Assessment. The Green Risk Assessment means "All places of worship can open with a FULL range of services, alongside physical distancing"

Note that even in the Green phase there is the rider about "physical distancing", about which many of you could continue to feel uneasy and uncomfortable.

We do not have a date when the Green Risk Assessment may become applicable. That is down to the Welsh Government and the Church in Wales Governing Body.

So, in the meantime, we will be continuing with our weekly Zoom Worships which you are all welcome to join, either on your computer/tablet/smartphone or via telephone.

We are looking to expand our on-line offerings and are in discussion with our Clergy to see what can be offered – if you have any

ideas or requests do let us know.

For those not on-line, we are happy to deliver copies of sermons, CDs of our recorded Zoom Worship, DVDs of our recorded Zoom Worship, Copies of Arthur Howells monthly prayers to use at home

Some local churches are in a position to offer services. For example, St John's, Gowerton are offering an outdoor service, for which you need to book your place a few days beforehand. We are in the process of identifying a full list of what is on offer and will send you a copy so, if you wish, you can attend these services.

We continue to add content to our website - including recordings of our Zoom Worships and Ian's weekly sermons – feel free to browse at <http://www.saintbarnabaschurch.org.uk/>

Social Events - We have held quizzes, a Welsh Evening and an Irish Evening on Zoom and are planning further events. If you have any ideas for an on-line social event you would enjoy, please let us know.

It is important to note, taken from the Pastoral Guidance from the Bench of Bishops, (Church in Wales link above) – “Pastoral visiting: Clergy and others duly licensed or commissioned should exercise their ordinary pastoral ministry from a distance, by phone and online. Pastoral visits should still only be undertaken where essential; such visits should generally be to the doorstep and social distancing measures must be scrupulously observed.”

If you have a need for a pastoral visit, please let ourselves or Ian know.

Can we assure you that, as Wardens, we are committed to reopening St Barnabas as soon as it is demonstrably safe to do so – but we must bear in mind our legal and moral responsibility towards the welfare and safety of all our clergy and parishioners.

We thank you for your support during this difficult time.

Please feel free to contact any of us if we can help you with anything or if you have any requests or ideas to further the mission of St Barnabas.

A printed copy of this letter will be hand delivered to parishioners without e-mail

With love and prayers

Your Wardens

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