

Hello to you all, I do hope you are all well.

I assume you've heard the Government's announcement that the restrictions on us will significantly reduce in early July, and that this means we are allowed to have services in our churches again from then. I assume, like me, that you are processing your thoughts and feelings about this.

I'm talking to you now because there are some decisions we need to make together about how we do this, and about how we are church together – at least for the time being.

So at core I'm asking you to have a real think about how we can be community together in this coming time bearing in mind our desires, our limitations and our needs.

For your consideration I'd like to outline what I feel are our restrictions, our needs, our desires, and some of the opportunities I'd like us to explore in this coming time. When you've given this some thought I'd like you to contact me, or any member of the ministry team so that I can discuss this with our PCCs and make some decisions.

The first thing I want to outline are the limitations we are facing.

I need to tell you that the service pattern we enjoyed before lockdown cannot now be replicated and we do need to live within our means. A number of things are at play:

1. Revd Lancaster has been covering two Kimbolton services a month but is now clear that he is not able to continue that. He'll still be around but I won't be putting him on the rota to lead services on my behalf.
2. Some of you won't know this, but I am one of the 2 million people who have been advised to shield. This means I am not available to take any services till the beginning of August. The Area Dean is willing to help – but I can't do anything till then.
3. I also want you to know that others in the ministry team are actually somewhat reticent about going back to "normal" – a mixture of age and other health concerns are behind that reticence.
4. Another aspect to our restrictions is that we expect to be fairly limited in what we can do when we are in church. It seems probable that the Church's guidance will prevent public singing, we will certainly have to

keep our distance, and we won't be sharing refreshments or fellowship in any practical way for some time. Our shared worship may well feel very sparse for some time.

So my first question is how we have a pattern of services that works within our means. In particular do we re-start in July sometime, or do we wait till it's easier to be together at once?

Next I want to outline something of the limitations I'm aware of within our communities.

Whilst there are going to be many eager to re-meet, we also have a number of people and families who are shielded like me and who will not be able to join us till August at the earliest.

So my second question is how do stay together with those who are not able to join us as they continue to be very careful socially?

Another thing in my mind is how we re-join as communities, how we re-connect with those who've been isolated, how we feel re-united and reassured as we come together again. Some of my feeling about this is it would be much better for us to hold services with the whole ministry team present at the same time together with you – rather than having things as they were with all of us dashing back and forth and rarely getting to be together with you together.

So my next question is whether perhaps, for a time, we have services with a cluster of churches – perhaps in a northern and southern grouping, using only two of our buildings in which we've been able to make the space as safe as possible.

The other concern in my mind is about how we keep hold of the many good things achieved in the last three months.

You won't know this, but our average daily views to our YouTube channel in this last month is 83. Our Easter service had 340 views, an average Sunday Service around 150. Some of our daily uploads approach 100 views. Something really good is happening about how we connect with people, and at no point have we had to say "come to church" because what we are can be available at any time or place.

Not only that, but many more of us are sharing in daily prayer and reflection who never did, and people who would find it fairly odd to come to a group in a house to do God stuff are joining in quite happily through the internet. The impression I get is that many more people have been growing in their faith than we ever imagined could be possible through turning up to Sunday Services.

Similarly, many of you have been enjoying Zoom groups – Pamela has continued her Wednesday group, I have a group where younger parents have been able to join in because they didn't have to sort out baby-sitters or leave the comfort of their home.

And hasn't it been delightful seeing the range of faces and children joining in with some of our services?

And let's not forget – for many young people church is boring and families are busy. It's just not easy or appealing committing to a church service on a day at a time when a family works shifts, or has shared childcare.

So I feel that without meaning to we've grown some capability that benefits the house-bound, the socially restricted, the time-poor, the easily bored or the shy-about- faith.

And at no point have we said "come to church"

So my final question is how we build from the benefits we've accrued, and which parts are we going to keep? Do we need or want daily prayers? Or are there other teaching materials or daily rambles that are what you still need and want?

So let me summarise these questions, because I want you to have a think and get back to me over the next week so we can plan accordingly:

1. How do we have a pattern of services that works within our ministry team's means. In particular do we re-start in July sometime, or do we wait till it's easier to be together at once and leave it till August.
2. how do we stay together with those who are not able to join us physically as they continue to be very careful socially? They are still us and we mustn't marginalise them.
3. Do we, for a time, have services with a cluster of churches – perhaps in a northern and southern grouping, perhaps using only two of our buildings which will be the ones we've been able to make as safe as possible.
4. How will we build from the benefits we've accrued from the work we've been doing online, and which parts are we going to keep?

I welcome your advice. Please do get in contact over the next week.

And to let you know, right now the plan is for the service on the 5th July to be let by Barham online – so the earliest some of us might be able to get together would be the 12th July.