

# Catholic Church of Mary, Mother of God

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5th June 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope this letter finds you and the family well and that you have managed to stay safe during this rather strange time.

As you know our churches have been closed for over ten weeks and although this has been a very difficult and sad time, this measure was introduced for safety reasons and for the protection of life. We are aware that many people rely on the Church for their spiritual and emotional wellbeing. It offers a place of comfort. A Government taskforce is working on reopening churches and so we may be able to reopen our church sometime soon. In order to do this, we must conduct a risk assessment and put in place a number of safety measures. Initially the churches will open only for private prayer by individuals. It will not be for public Masses or other gatherings. This will come later.

One of the measures we have to undertake is to establish a small team of volunteer stewards. They will be in church to ask visitors to observe social distancing, monitor the entrance, exit and inside of the church. We are not permitted to ask for volunteers who are elderly (over 70) or vulnerable. For this reason I am asking for younger members of the parish, under 70 years, who have no underlying health problems, to volunteer for this task.

We will provide hand sanitizer for all helpers and prayer visitors and seats will be clearly marked in the church as to where visitors should sit to respect social distancing. The church will only be open for a few hours during the day and not for extended hours as it sometimes was and certain areas will be out of bounds. You will not be asked to perform any task that might be a risk to you or to public health, and you will not be asked to undertake any kind of pastoral role for those who visit the church.

If you feel that you could give some help we would be very grateful. Although we have no idea at this time how many people will want to come to church, I know that the opening of our church will be a really welcome move for many of our parishioners. If you would like to volunteer or for more information, please contact me by email on [pondersend@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:pondersend@rcdow.org.uk) with your contact details and stating that you are a parent at St Mary's School.

We have no firm information as yet about when public Masses will begin. Parents of First Holy Communion children (2020) should wait for further information about how and when your child's First Communion will be celebrated. When the time comes the First Holy Communion Masses might not be as we originally envisaged but we will do our best to make sure that we are flexible and that the celebrations will be safe and a good experience for the children and their families.

If you have any questions or concerns then do not hesitate to contact me direct either by phone or email – the details are above.

With my very best wishes to you and your family and be assured of my prayers for you all.

God bless you always.

Yours devotedly,

*Fr John*