



## **IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2021**

Good morning everybody

This Sunday, the Church remembers those wise men who travelled from afar to witness the revelation of God made flesh in the infant Jesus and to worship at his cradle.

However, it's with a very heavy heart that, having consulted with our church leadership team including our churchwarden Anthony and our Health & Safety Officer Peter, I've taken the decision **to close the doors of Great St Mary's to public worship with immediate effect** and, instead, encourage you, if possible, to worship at Jesus' cradle by tuning into our service streamed live via our website (<http://www.sawbridgeworthchurch.com/>) and Facebook page.

Whilst we're not aware of anybody within our immediate community being taken ill, we live in an area surrounded by a very worrying rise in the new more transmittable variant of the Covid-19 virus. Whilst the vaccines offer long-term hope, I'm also aware of the immediate pressure our local health organisations - not least the Princess Alexandra - find themselves under. With the situation expected to get worse before it gets better, they are now seeing a greater diversity of people being taken seriously ill; even children and younger, fitter people who, in the first wave of the pandemic, were relatively unaffected by the virus. My decision also comes in the wake of an email to all clergy and churchwardens from Bishop Alan giving us special dispensation to decide, on a case-by-case basis, as to what to do for the next three Sundays.

As you might imagine, I haven't taken this decision lightly. My heart passionately desires for us to remain open for public worship and to share in God's medicine for our souls. However, my head tells me that Jesus' comment that "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" is just as true when we gather online or in private prayer as when we gather face-to-face, and that, in the current circumstances, we need to act with caution to pre-empt somebody from our congregation becoming seriously ill.

The situation, as you probably know, is evolving fast - hence the relative lateness of this email to you all - and we will not only continue to review the circumstances frequently but will keep you informed as to when we may be able to open again for public worship. In the meantime, may I encourage you please to relay this information on to anybody you think might be intending to attend Great St Mary's tomorrow but who may not have received this email. And may I also remind you that the church will still remain open for individual private prayer and reflection at advertised times throughout the week.

Yours, with my prayers for your health and well-being

## Fr Simon

*The Revd Simon Vivian*

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*(Day off: Thursday)*

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