

## Looking Ahead

If you're getting pretty fed up of lockdown you'll probably be glad to see any sign of light at the end of the tunnel and, with the rules in England regarding churches being relaxed recently, you may be wondering if we might follow suit shortly? Well, we are getting some hints that next week's Welsh Government lockdown review *\*may\** consider reopening churches for private prayer before too long, although we don't have any suggestion of a particular date yet. In addition, as in England, a government announcement saying churches *can* reopen is not the same thing as saying any particular church *will* reopen. The Church of England has produced a lengthy list of precautionary steps that have to be fulfilled first and similar guidance will be provided in Wales.

The Church in Wales has stated:

- Discussions are taking place with Welsh Government over the possible re-opening of churches led by the Archbishop of Wales via the Inter-Faith Forum.
- A protocol for re-opening is being developed by Welsh Government in the context of the specific legislative context in Wales
- This protocol will inform guidance from the Church in Wales on how churches can be re-opened safely. This guidance will be a practical tool to help you plan your future opening and mitigate risks of transmission of Covid-19. The guidance will centre on procedures for social distancing, hygiene and premises cleaning.
- When the law permits, we envisage a gradual opening of churches based on a clear demonstration of compliance with the protocol and guidance – our primary concern is for the health of those that will use our churches again.

Once we have received the guidance, we will be able to assess the cost implications of reopening and to clarify whether we have the staff available to do the work that will be required. It is likely that some churches will reopen before others and that churches will only be open on certain days, initially at least. Further advice will follow as soon as it is known.

### **Current decision making in the Mission Area**

The MA Executive (the Standing Committee for the MA Conference) is having virtual meetings using Zoom and is currently making decisions in consultation with Alexis, Caroline and myself. The Shared Ministry Team have also met using Zoom. We have considered a Zoom meeting of the MA Conference but recognise that not all members have the technology to be able to access such a meeting. Depending on how things develop we will either attempt a MAC zoom meeting or else seek MAC approval by email for any key decisions that need to be made. Central in our thinking is the need to ensure the safety of those who use the church or work on its behalf. We are currently consulting with churchwardens and others to ascertain how many staff we might have available in the coming weeks. If you have any questions or concerns about our approach, please give Steve Willson a ring – 01938 553164.