



St Paul's West Hackney

Wednesday, 6 January 2021 – AKA the Feast of the Epiphany

Dear Friends,

CLOSURE OF ST PAUL'S CHURCH FOR WORSHIP

New Year greetings to you all from the Rectory and I hope that this finds you safe and well. The announcement of the latest lockdown measures coincides with our undertaking to review the decision to close our church for worship which we took just before Christmas, in the light of the worsening Covid crisis.

Our Standing Committee met on Monday night to carry out this review. We took counsel from wise and frontline healthcare professionals from St Paul's and beyond and listened to the Secretary of State for Health's pronouncement that not only is the new strain of the virus spreading like wildfire but also that we should behave as though we all had the virus! We also took on board the stark reality that one person in thirty in London has been affected by the virus in recent weeks. In the light of these realities, we saw no option but to remain closed.

As is required, I have informed our Bishops, our Archdeacon and our Area Dean of this decision and I'm pleased that our Archdeacon backed this decision up by email this morning. It may reassure you to know that many other churches and Hackney and beyond have come to the same conclusion.

The decision to close is underpinned by a commitment to keeping our community safe, to allowing the vaccine time to take effect and to avoid putting additional strain on local and national NHS services, which are at breaking point.

Whilst it's sad to think that we won't be able to worship together in the church itself, God is spirit and those who worship do so primarily in spirit and in truth and so we will continue to do all we can to enable this through our online Virtual Services and our ongoing personal prayers. We'll continue to keep in touch with and to look out for one another through our WhatsApp groups, telephone calls and the many informal links which we share with one another.

Our building may be closed for worship, but it will carry on giving glory to God and serving the most vulnerable in our community by continuing to be the home of our excellent partners, such as North London Action for the Homeless, Akwaba and Open Doors. As an essential service providing food, the Farmers' Market will continue to operate as well.

We will review the position in the week beginning 14 February which is, of course, not only St Valentine's day, but also the start of school half term, as many of you will be aware! Until then, please continue to pray for the church community of which we are a part and the parish which we're called serve and to embody the very best of common sense, humour, intelligence and resilience which is the hallmark of St Paul's West Hackney!

God bless and stay safe and well,