

1st November 2020

## PLACES OF WORSHIP

Dear Helen,

May I begin by thanking yourself and all involved with parliament for doing everything that can possibly be done in serving our nation through such a difficult time with the Coronavirus Pandemic. Many difficult decisions have had to be made for all the right reasons which I can understand can never be easy but your efforts are highly appreciated.

The decision especially of late March to bring the whole United Kingdom into National Lockdown was a hard time for everyone but I do not think that there was any argument that it was right decision to make. I, as an individual and we as a parish community were more than prepared to play our part in ridding the country of this virus.

Ever since July we have been enjoying the opportunity to open our church doors again, especially on Sundays to welcome our people back for public worship. The numbers have increased over the weeks to the extent that we averaged over 300 people every Sunday throughout September but spread throughout five different services so that the appropriate regulations were carried out - face coverings were compulsory, keeping two metres apart, track and trace system in operation and hand sanitising provided at entry and exit (face, hands and space).

As we are entering into a new National Lockdown, I ask you to please to reconsider the decision to deny collective worship again. This period will have a deep impact on many people, both financially and mentally and many come to church to gain a strength by being reminded they are part of a wider family. Loneliness is a sad experience of many people's lives at the moment. As well as the physical safety of the people being met, as a parish community we provide a deeper need in supporting people and allowing them to know we are always here for them. Our gatherings at the weekend provide a substantial support and reassurance that people seek at these times. It is difficult to meet this need with locked doors. I would, therefore, like to ask why Parliament would feel it necessary to deny our churches public worship, where people can gather safely distanced but provided with a sense of togetherness for everyone who comes. Is any evidence available that church gatherings were responsible for the rise in the recent higher transmission rate? I would be very interested if that could be made known to us.

Please be assured again of my appreciation for your service to our community at this time.

Thank you for taking the time to read the letter and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.



Father Liam Gallagher

Parish Priest

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