



Dear Brothers and Sisters

Temporary pausing of communal worship at St Paul's and St Timothy's

This is to share, that in consultation and with many voices of support from ECC, Standing Committee unanimously voted last night to pause worship in the two centres at the current time. In the meantime we will go back online only, with the minister leading worship taking the decision to either live-stream from the churches with a small tech team, or post pre-recorded material. We will assess this again following the government's review expected the week commencing 15th February – school half term holiday week.

This decision was made with a heavy heart. However, we feel this is the right thing for many reasons, including in recognition of supporting the “stay at home” message which the rest of the country is being asked to live by in law, in solidarity with our community and with an eye on the statistics which show East Swindon in a particularly serious situation.

We do however propose to open St Paul's for an hour a week for private prayer on Thursdays between 9:30-10:30am commencing Thursday 14th January. There will be one steward and one clergy in attendance at these times. Of course, we will need to abide by strict Covid guidelines and there can be no catching up or chatting with others who also may attend – whether inside or outside the building – yet we pray that this will be a support to those who wish to come and find comfort and strength from being in the worship sanctuary.

Another consequence of this latest lock-down is that, just as bookings were picking up, which enabled us to meet staff wages, our income from hirings has reduced again. It is therefore with sadness that we will be part-time furloughing our three paid staff. This was another difficult decision, particularly as they have been so flexible and supportive, yet we feel that, to safeguard their future jobs as much as possible, we need to take advantage of the Government Job Retention scheme. They will still be working, but on reduced hours to cover the work that will still need doing. Please do keep Cheryl, Jackie and Zoe in your prayers – we thank God for them and all they do and recognise that this is not easy for them either.

Whilst we may feel that “we're back here again” in this pandemic, there are many things that have changed that give hope. Not least that two vaccines are being rolled out rapidly and the light is beginning to burn stronger. In the meantime, we know that we probably have the toughest time yet ahead of us until the Spring. May we find comfort and strength in our Lord, and in the love and kindness of each other.

You are in my prayers, and I hold you in love.

Revd Trudie Wigley

CofE Rector Dorcan Church

St Paul's, Covingham; St Timothy's, Liden