

ST ALBAN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH MACCLESFIELD

PRAYING SAFELY IN OUR CHURCH



**RETURNING TO WORSHIP
TOGETHER**

A SMALL FIRST STEP TOWARDS JOINT WORSHIP

Under government and diocesan guidelines and approval, we are being allowed to open up our church for socially distanced prayer. This obviously can only be achieved, like the miracle of faith itself, if everyone involved plays their part. Please read and follow carefully the information contained in this briefing guidance and adhere to the instructions of those who will meet, greet, and direct you at the entrance to church. In this way, we, with God's help, will attain a safe first step back to our worship together.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

It would be misleading to think that because we have come through the worst aspects of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic that the worst is over. It is clear from the government guidelines to 'Stay Alert, Stay Safe and Protect the NHS', that we are all still at risk if we let our guard down and let the virus regain its momentum to cause a second wave. In particular, in line with government guidelines, we would caution anyone who falls into the following categories not to attend these prayer sessions:

- Those over 70 with or without COVID-19 symptoms
- Anyone, regardless of age, who has underlying health conditions that would make them vulnerable to COVID-19
- Those who have had symptoms of, or have been in contact with someone suspected of having, COVID-19 in the last fourteen days

OPENING CHURCH FOR PRAYER SESSIONS

We have decided from 15th June onwards at St Alban's RC Church that we will have daily prayer sessions of 15 minutes duration bookable online and by telephone (see **BOOKING YOUR PRAYER SESSION**)

We have decided from 15th June onwards at St Alban's RC Church that depending on the availabilities of our volunteers we aim to have have two prayer sessions a day with 15 minutes duration each, bookable online and by telephone (see **BOOKING YOUR PRAYER SESSION**)

These prayer sessions will be conducted strictly under the government guidelines that apply at that time. The prayer sessions will, unfortunately, be limited to 6 socially distanced prayer spaces per session and will take place on fixed wooden pews. No other parts of the church will be open or accessible at this time.

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If we manage collaboratively to carry out this spiritual gathering safely, we may be allowed to move to the next form of, perhaps, less restrictive impositions to church attendance.

BOOKING YOUR PRAYER SESSION

- Due to social distancing restrictions there are set sessions when you can visit church. These sessions are strictly by appointment only and will last for 15 minutes twice each day.
- To book a session online (24 hours) go to:
<https://stalbanscatholicchurch.setmore.com/>
- Sessions can also be booked over the telephone on 01625 408345, any time between 10:30am - 1:00pm, each week day (up to 4 hours before the prayer session, you want to book, begins)
- At the moment the prayer sessions, due to social distancing, are restricted in number to 6 and therefore must be booked in advance to ensure that no one is disappointed or, importantly, that we do not breach our social distancing government guidelines.
- At the point of booking it will merely be confirmed if there is a space available for the session that you wish to book. If that session is fully booked, by all means pick another for that day or for another day.
- If you decide, having made a booking for a prayer session, that you will not be able to attend then please cancel that booking online or by telephone up to 4 hours before that prayer session begins to allow another person to take up that vacant place.

COMING TO PRAYER SESSIONS

- It is important to remember that when the church opens up for prayer, it will only open for that purpose, and doors will only be opened very near to the allotted opening and closing times allocated to that session.
- Consequently, to avoid bunching outside the church and inside the church porch, and to maintain a steady flow of movement so that everyone gets seated safely, please plan to arrive no earlier than 15 minutes leading up to session you have booked.
- To reduce the risk of cross contamination at these prayer sessions, we may offer one piece of written material to assist in prayer. Please remember to take this material and all your personal belongings home.
- Moreover, if Father Peter, Father Paschal or Deacon Gyorgy are in attendance at any of the prayer sessions, it will be solely for the purpose of private and open prayer with the congregation. If you have need of spiritual guidance outwith the purpose of these prayer sessions, please contact them directly via the parish website. (<http://www.stalbanmacc.org.uk/contactus.html>)

THE USE OF HAND SANITISER, DISPOSABLE GLOVES AND MASKS

- We will provide disposable gloves, masks and hand sanitiser for those assisting at the prayer sessions and for the cleaning of the church after each session.
- Those attending the prayer sessions will be asked to either bring their own face mask or will be provided with one to wear during the prayer session as well as be seated socially distanced during the prayer sessions.
- Handsanitiser will be provided for all attending the sessions and names will be taken for trace and track reasons.

ENTERING AND MOVING AROUND OUR CHURCH

- Social distancing should be maintained throughout your visit to and from church.
- We will place 2 metre taped spacings within the church grounds and within the porch entrance:

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please adhere to this throughout your visit to and from the church.

- On entering church, you will be given a laminated ticket and allocated a seat; you will be asked to leave this ticket on your seat when leaving the prayer session.
- The church will have a floor plan on display in the entrance with directional arrows to guide you in a clockwise direction to your seat. Please follow the directions to the seat number that matches your ticket.

ENTERING AND MOVING AROUND OUR CHURCH

- Please remember that the church will have been opened up specifically for restricted prayer sessions (on our wooden pews) and that all other areas of the church are still off limits, e.g. all areas around the altars, sacristy, church tower, vestry - including toilets normally open to the congregation. In addition, the lighting and dedication of offertory candles and petitions are something we cannot engage in at present.

PRAYING ALONE AND TOGETHER

- Once seated, naturally, you may engage straightaway in your own private prayer.
- Once it appears that the prayer session is fully settled, a brief announcement will be given by those supervising the session and a signal will be given when the session is to be concluded.
- Thereafter, everyone will be directed to leave by the side exit.
- At present we are not allowed to conduct the sessions in an opening or closing prayer

LEAVING CHURCH

- At the end of the prayer session you will be given clear instruction on how to exit the church: this will be by the side door. A prayer session volunteer will come to the end of your pew and direct you to leave the church in 2 metre social distancing gaps.
- When leaving church, please maintain your 2 metre distancing whilst inside and outside church premises. Always remember that standard lockdown guidelines apply in all circumstances during these prayer sessions, and they should not be treated as social gatherings.

A FINAL NOTE

We are aware that this cannot replace praying together as part of a congregation; however, please remember, that no matter where you pray, whether you speak to God in church or elsewhere, He will always hear you.

Hopefully we will soon be able to sit together in full worship, until then be assured, you will always be in our thoughts and prayers as much loved members of our parish family.

Love and prayer,

Fr. Peter Burke

Parish Priest

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