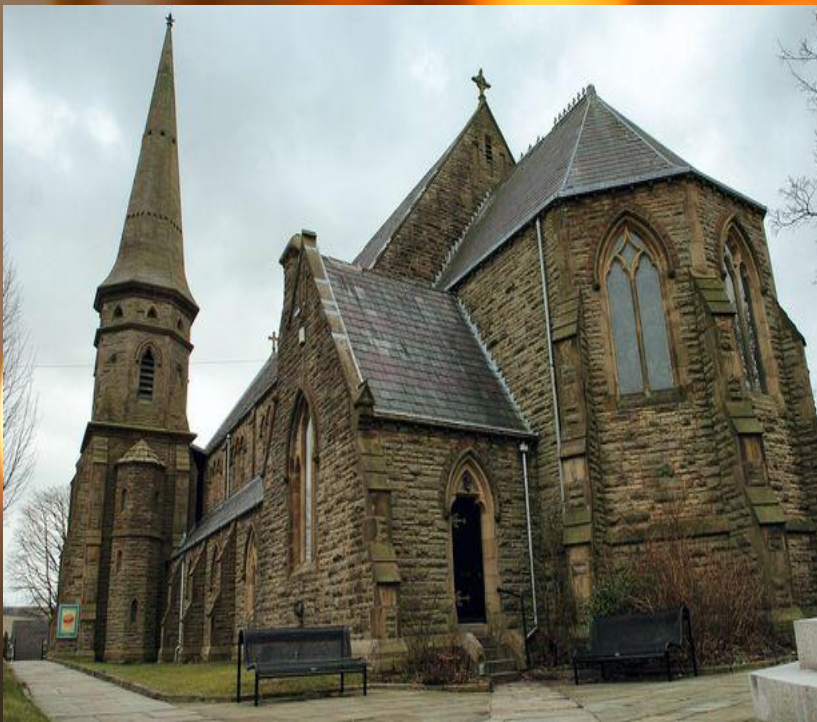


Report on the opening up of churches

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# Emerging church

COMING BACK TO WORSHIP  
St John the Baptist church, Baxenden



JULY 6

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**What is happening so far?  
Where God is taking us?**

# Emerging Church

## Government and Diocesan Guidelines

For many it will be an absolute joy that once again we can gather with our people to worship God from July 4<sup>th</sup>, at the same time, we acknowledge that not every church will be able to offer worship from that date. Many of our people will be fearful or bereft, and our nation is still living through a time of risk because the virus will be a major factor in our lives for months or even years to come.

### Current guidelines –

- Churches may open for worship from July 4th as long as they are COVID safe.
- There is no restriction on numbers for worship other than the restrictions needed to maintain safe social distancing
- People must maintain social distance. This should be 2 metres where possible. If it can only be one metre (plus) then consideration should be given to asking people to wear face masks or other such measures to mitigate the increased risk of transmission.
- Where possible there should be different ways in and ways out of the church building.
- There should be hand hygiene points at the entrance and the exit with clear signs to ask people to use it.
- The advice will be that services should be kept short and the people should be discouraged from remaining in the building for any significant time afterwards.
- Books and re-usable Orders of Service should not be handed out. Single use service sheets may be given out as long as they are then taken away by the person using it. They must NOT be given out by a sidesperson but collected by each individual as they enter.
- There is to be no food or drink, 'except that which is central to worship.'
- There cannot be any congregational or choral singing. It is permissible to have a single cantor and organist. There may be instrumentalists but no wind or brass instruments. *Please watch out for more advice on music as this may be updated over the next few weeks.*

***“For I know the plans I have you, plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future,” declares the Lord.***

***Jeremiah 29:11***

- The Government will give guidance on Holy Communion which is likely to say:
  - There should be no common cup and no exchanging of the Peace.
  - The celebrant should wear a facemask 'when speaking or singing over food' – ie. during the Eucharistic Prayer.
  - Hands should be washed carefully at the offertory and again before the administration of communion.
  - Communion should be received in the hands with arms outstretched
- Cash poses a risk of infection. Ideally as many people as possible would switch to standing order, but if cash collections are taken they should be left somewhere secure for 72 hours in a sealed bag or box before counting. This may be a time to look into contactless card giving.
- If you are holding multiple services on the same day, there will need to be cleaning after each one. If you have a number of spaces, chapels or halls an option might be to have different acts of worship in different places.
- Records of those who attend will need to be kept for test and trace purposes. Good practice suggests that this will also include people who come into the church to clean etc. We are awaiting guidance on the GDPR implications of this.

### Weddings:

It is possible to have weddings from July 4th. The maximum number who may attend is 30 and please note that this number includes the priest, the vergers, the organist, the photographer etc.

*– as a church we will welcome weddings maintaining guidelines and keeping people safe with the restricted numbers enforced.*

### Funerals:

Funerals should have no more than 30 people in attendance, and physical distancing should be strictly adhered to with 2m guideline

*– as a church we will embrace funeral services with our love and greatest care. Keeping the service relevant, sentimental, and safe with the guidelines.*

### Baptism

A baptism should have no more than 30 people present, unless it takes place during 'routine communal

*– as a church we will look to have separate baptism services with just one family at a time and hold the service on Sunday afternoon.*

## Emerging ideas:

### **Summary of our church congregation through reflection, prayer, and contemplation on seeking church through the Kingdom of God -**

The ethos of looking out for one another is, at this moment in time, at the forefront of people's minds.

'Choose right now, who you will serve. As for me and my house. We will serve the Lord.'  
Whose servant do you want to be?

I'm praying into a feeling at the moment, that for us as church, a new chapter is about to begin. A chapter that can allow us to harness current notions of togetherness, encouragement, generosity, kindness, servitude, thankfulness

Let's pray that God will lead us to be a people who appreciate each other, truly love each other, and encourage each other, by doing things TOGETHER

Maybe we could provide some sort of weekly time where we can just learn to sit in quietness and in God's presence.

Tuesday and Thursday evening discussions. I have learned so much being involved and listening to what people have to say. Wherever we go as a church from here on in, I believe there is a good core of likeminded people, with a hunger and enthusiasm to get involved in learning biblical truths and understandings.

Our fellowship and worship should involve some interactive learning of this nature.

Rather than having several house groups all doing different things, why not have one meeting a week where you could do a similar thing as you have done in these sessions. We could still split into smaller groups and stuff during the evening. I am convinced our understanding and biblical knowledge would grow enormously.

The power of delving into the bible, and simply living out what it tells us. I know it has given me a fresh impetus to learn more, and to want to dig a bit deeper. I want to be part of a church like that, and I honestly believe that this is where God wants me/us to begin again. I believe they were attracted by the way of life which they saw within those early churches and seeing a holiness and peace within their members.

Prayer must be at the centre of our service(s) to God

- Rhythm of Prayer: Daily/ Weekly
- Encourage different people to lead
- Rooted in the 'real' world
- During this time, I am finding that resting in Jesus is so necessary for me. Realising it is so much what we need. Where does our strength come from, our protection, our motivation, our promptings and nudges, if we don't first rest and try to be 'still' with Him.

This is the crunch isn't it, coming to Jesus knowing there does not need to be any pretense, we can truly rest in his love over us. The plan is that we look outward from that rest, away from ourselves to others and what is going on around us. That's the rest of the story.

I think we have all enjoyed the fellowship that we have continued to experience through Zoom. I think it would be very beneficial to continue our House group sessions this way too. We need to share the vision to be a Christian presence in our community of Baxenden, and to tell the community we are here to open the doors of our building to welcome everyone into

God's house.

Children need to be at the heart of worship. The Bible passage about the little children and Jesus in Luke 18 v 15 to 17. We are all children of God, but as adults we can learn from the worship of little ones.

A children's choir was one idea.

Love, Humility, Service, Care

Bible passage: Philippians 2 v 1-11

Reaching out to the Homeless, the lonely and the vulnerable.

We need to attract children and young people to come and then become involved.

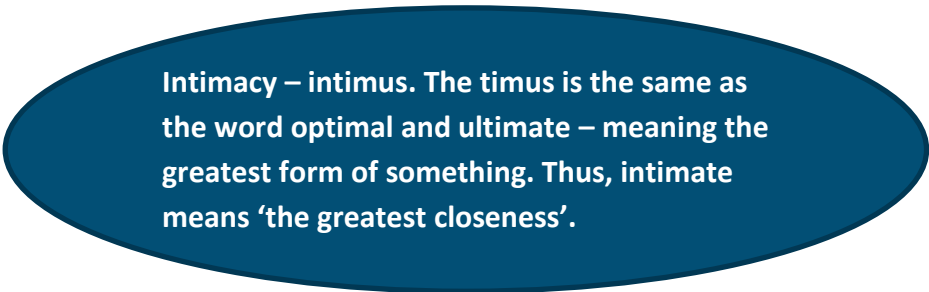
Some find their ways into church for different reasons (Baptisms, funerals and school services) and perhaps we should be creating more and better reasons for them to visit more often.

## Emerging into the Kingdom

So, what is our emerging church going to be like?

God willing - Jesus led - Spiritually filled! - An 'Intimate Church'?

Can we become an intimate church that longs to encourage each other to be closely intimate with God?



**Intimacy – intimus. The timus is the same as the word optimal and ultimate – meaning the greatest form of something. Thus, intimate means 'the greatest closeness'.**

To be in greater depths of a personal relationship where the wonders, mysteries and grace of God, are experienced in so much of his peace and goodness.

To be blessed, refreshed, restored beyond our understanding – to be in those green pastures and by the still waters of life.

To find a wider love for all who come, the inclusivity of love and care amidst a fellowship that receives each other with open hearts.

**We have a special opportunity for a small congregation to have the greatest potential for the highest level of connection and relationship with God, and each other. The loving and real potential that could provide a network of support for those facing difficulties – wellbeing, emotional, physical, spiritual – as well as opportunities for healthy expression and engagement in every possible area of life.**

We are hoping and praying in the Lord to bring us back home. To hold us and free us, to break and build us. Let us faithfully look to the Kingdom first, so the Kingdom can establish his church, and not to ourselves first as a church to try to establish the Kingdom. This will mean a lot of ‘letting go’ of how we used to do church, and to trust intimately in God in forming new patterns (within the Church of England) of coming together.

Consequently, if we seek the strength, wisdom, and discernment of God, we can only then come to him in our own limitations. In these endeavors we must remain humble and at best amateurish in our efforts taking the risks and accepting failures, and this is ok. If we gave up the dream of perfection and embraced the messy imperfections we have, our fellowship and worship should become more inclusive and involve everyone.

## Sunday Services:

We will need to meet these changing times in positive hope and faith. Church will be different, and our services need to reflect that. The naïve of the church will still be the main area to congregate but with limited numbers. It is sensible to host between 20-30 people at the most, so we want to provide three services over the day.

It is proposed we have a family service at 9am, but this will be by ‘zoom’ as many of the parents do not feel safe to come back in physical proximity. The children’s leaders will develop this service and make it accessible for all to join in. Joyce will be creating a poster to advertise the service to all the community.

We will have a communion service at 10am that will be directed through a mixture of liturgy and variances of discussions on the word of the lord.

A third service will be alternative with time for reflection, prayer, and restoration. This might be better placed in the early evening at 6:30pm to start with, or later in the afternoon if this time does not work for people.

All the services will need to be held within one hour or shorter, to limit the time of exposure together (government / diocesan guidelines).

As we navigate our way back to church in these early days, it is important we keep positive channels of communication open between the Lord and ourselves. If any changes need to happen, we do it through the grace of God.

People are welcome to come to all the services or just the one, if the attendance at a particular service exceeds the recommended numbers, we will need consider how we manage this.

Whatever service your heart wills you to attend, please come with no expectations other than in hope to meet with the God of creation, the Lord of salvation, and the Spirit of peace.

You are also encouraged to bring your Bible for no other reason than to open the pages as you open your heart and receive him intimately.

## Other thoughts:

### **Some considerations for you –**

- It will not be possible to host home groups at this time, however, the Tuesday and Thursday zoom homegroup has opened up some very interesting discussion and reflection, do we want to continue with this may be once a week?
- Not everyone will be able to come back to church physically, especially those shielding or considered vulnerable, so do we continue to have a short zoom service on Sunday morning as well?
- It is good to have our church open for prayer on Monday and Saturday morning, do we want to open it up for more times and days, if so, what would that look like, and would people be willing to join a rota to look after church during these times?
- How do we keep other people informed if they are not technically/media able to?

**Please let me know your thoughts as soon as you can on all these matters, and other ideas you might have. I would also appreciate any queries that I have not covered yet, and I know there are plenty of uncertainties yet to be understood. For up-to-date information you can simply visit the government website -**

**[www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)**

**or the diocesan website - [www.blackburn.anglican.org/news/352/important-advice-in-relation-to-coronavi](http://www.blackburn.anglican.org/news/352/important-advice-in-relation-to-coronavi)**

**Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, when the Almighty was still with me – Job 29:4**

Coming back to church can be exciting; how we come back to church will be complex, but together in fellowship with our Lord, there is nothing that is impossible.



**A new beginning, a new horizon, a new way of life**



