

Lifting of Restrictions:

The Government have confirmed that the vast majority of the current restrictions will be lifted on Monday 19th July. This includes the wearing of face coverings and social distancing requirements. Regarding places of worship, the Government's published advice also indicates that congregational singing will be permitted once again. The Church of England has issued guidance for parish churches, but ultimately, each local church will need to make their own decisions about how they proceed. Following our PCC meeting on Monday 19th, we have agreed to move forward with the following guidance particularly relating to our Sunday services.

Some Biblical Principles

As far as our church community is concerned, kindness and sensitivity should be our watchwords – *'loving your neighbour as yourself'*. Some will be feeling anxious or cautious about these changes, and we should each seek to be accommodating and compassionate in our dealing with one another.

At the same time, the Apostle Paul reminds us that *'God has not given us a spirit of fear.'* Therefore, whilst proceeding with caution and common sense, we must not be governed by fear.

Specific Areas of Guidance and information

Ventilation

We will have as much ventilation as possible at all our church services, with windows and doors open where possible.

Face Coverings

Although not now mandatory, we have a large number of people in a confined space. We suggest wearing face masks when moving around inside the church building, but you can take off your mask when you are seated.

Congregational Singing

This can now re-commence from 19th July. However, because singing has a high risk of spreading the virus, we propose allowing congregational singing, but with face masks on.

Social Distancing

We propose to keep the current layout in the church, with rows still spaced out. During August, we do not normally have a pressure on seating. If there is the need for more seating, we can add more into the lounge area. In September, we plan to return to the normal layout, with people still free to leave space between themselves and others if they wish.

For those wanting and needing to be more careful such as the clinically vulnerable

We propose to have one quarter of the church with good distancing between chairs, and for this area to have face masks on the whole time. This area will be next to the side fire door to allow people to leave straight after the service if required. This will give confidence to those more anxious about any changes being made. Signs will be available to show where this area is located when you come into church.

Hospitality

Although we can begin hospitality, the reality is that it will take time to rebuild the hospitality team, so we propose working towards having this up and running by September. We will continue to suggest people mingle outside after the church service.

Venue Check-In

We will no longer need to have 'check in' or sign ups for our services. We will however have a Welcome team and Welcome table for those who are new to the church. It is proposed that the Youth and Children still use the sign ups. During August, this will help with providing the correct number of leaders for our different youth and children's groups.

Hand Sanitiser

We will continue to locate hand sanitiser at the entrances to the building for the duration, and it will be used during the distribution of Holy Communion.

Holy Communion

The guidance from the Church of England is that we can now begin to have wine as well as the bread when we receive communion. However, many people are cautious about using a shared communion cup to drink the wine. As a temporary measure, we will be providing individual cups of wine for you to use.

Prayer Ministry

We want to offer prayer ministry but in limited numbers at any one time. We will ask both the prayer team and the person receiving prayer to wear masks and to remain 1 m apart.

Conclusion

The pandemic is not over and the virus is still at large, however the huge success of the vaccine roll-out does mean that the level of risk (in terms of serious illness, hospitalisation or death) is significantly reduced, particularly for those who have been double vaccinated.

We will still ask people to be cautious in how they interact with one another, to receive vaccinations where offered, use testing that is offered and stay at home if you are exhibiting symptoms. The message from 19th July onwards remains one of caution, but with a greater emphasis on personal responsibility and as Christians always thinking of others in all we do and say.

These measures are aimed at moving forward cautiously, taking small manageable steps giving people a sense of forward momentum, recognising that things might change quickly as we have seen over the last 18 months. So let's go forward together - with courage, compassion and faith.

Simon and Debbie Dust