

# THE REOPENING OF THIS CHURCH FOR PUBLIC MASS: SUNDAY 12 JULY 9AM

Thanks to our volunteer stewards and cleaners, we are able to open for Mass at 9am next Sunday.

This is most definitely NOT a return to normal, however welcome a return to Mass clearly is.

- No-one should come to Mass who has any cold or flu-like symptoms, is shielding or has a medical condition that makes them particularly vulnerable. If you choose to come to Mass—and the choice is yours, the Sunday obligation has not been re-imposed and livestreaming will continue—you will notice many changes as we follow compulsory guidelines designed to minimise the risks involved in gathering indoors in this time of pandemic.
- Please remember that no parish, no priest, and no parishioner has been asked to do anything that they do not feel comfortable with.
- In implementing these guidelines, we are all in unfamiliar territory—no-one has had to do this before. Please be patient and bear with us if things do not go as smoothly as they might. Our biggest concern is in estimating how many people will come. At the moment, we have organised one Sunday Mass at 9am. If this proves too little, we will add another Sunday Mass at 11am the following week.
- Both main doors are available for entry: if there is a queue please be socially distant.
- You must wear a face covering and sanitise your hands on entering.
- We are permitted a maximum of 100 people only: please accept apologies now if you arrive and are not allowed in. That would be a very unhappy situation we know and we will provide more Masses if needed in our second week.
- All toilets in church are out of use
- Door and windows must be open: that might not be as cosy as you hope for in an English summer!
- Stewards will show you to a seat, filling the church from the front. You cannot linger at the back to chat. Individuals must maintain a distance of 1.5m, which is 3 people per pew at the sides, 4 in the centre. All those in one household may of course sit together as normal, such as a husband and wife, or a family.
- There will be boxes for any donations and offertory (no collections can be taken).
- There can be no sign of peace, no singing, no shared books and no holy water. At least for the time being there will be no musicians, no servers, no readers.
- The arrangements for Holy Communion will be explained to you before Mass, ensuring minimum movement, standing and queuing. Stewards will direct you and maintain social distancing.
- Stewards will direct you out of church (both main doors available for exit) beginning from the back of church. You may not gather to chat inside church and if you do gather outside, please remember to distance yourselves.
- Only the clergy may go into the sacristy area behind the altar.
- Mass has to be celebrated without the prolonging of any part and bidding prayers are therefore to be left out.
- Once people have left, all used pews are wiped and cleaned with disinfectant, and the church mopped.

I am sorry that this may seem a bit directive and negative, but regulations only exist to tell us what to do and stop us doing what we shouldn't, and in this case so that we are as safe as possible.

The times of weekday Masses are being co-ordinated with stewards and cleaners. These will be on the parish web site as soon as decided and of course on this sheet next week. The deanery website (see front page header) contains details of what's happening in the deanery.

Thank you all for bearing with this, thank you to our volunteers and to Dcn Leo and John Archer for much practical advice and support.

The most practical issue is the obligatory cleaning of the pews and the floor after each Mass: this must be done. That's a lot more cleaning than normal.

Another issue is that to begin with we shall have to estimate the numbers of you who will return to Mass at this time, an important point because the size of the church means we can have an absolute maximum of 100 people in church at a time (to ensure social distancing). Remember that the Sunday obligation has NOT been restored so no one need worry about missing Sunday Mass. So, will we need more Sunday Masses or fewer? We don't know for sure!

We have decided not to make use of the balcony because of issues with movement making social distancing difficult and because cleaning that and the stairs and rails would be a very big task indeed. And remember, we could be cleaning after every Mass for many months to come.

The guidelines also effect what actually happens at Mass and the way we receive Holy Communion. This will all be explained in due course. They suggest a minimum of people on the sanctuary. Therefore, to begin with only Fr Stephen and Deacon Leo will at the altar. As soon as we are used to the new arrangements we hope to make use of a server and a reader, but not at first. This is new for everyone, especially the clergy, and routines of hygiene in the sacristy and sanctuary need to become familiar.

Everyone must wear a face covering. There can be no singing, no shared books, no holy water, no exchange of peace, everyone is meant to leave promptly when Mass has ended and Mass is not meant to be extended in any way. All this is simply to minimise the risk of passing on the virus, but it is a reason that, as the Archbishops say, we are not returning to normal.

The priests of the deanery and each parish is busy trying make sure the guidelines are met, that there is an appropriate number of Masses at the right times (bearing in mind the requirement for cleaning) and come to a decision about when public Mass safely resumes. You will be kept informed. Fr Stephen, Dcn Leo, our Health and Safety officer John Archer and others are assessing all this most carefully. We have a duty to keep everyone who comes to church as safe as possible.

It is up to each individual to decide whether he or she may safely attend Mass—there is absolutely no pressure to make any decision except the one you are happy with. It is equally up to each parish to decide when it is ready.

*Fr Stephen*

## **VOLUNTEER STEWARDS & CLEANERS**

**If you can volunteer to help, please email Fr Stephen at  
[stmcov@gmail.com](mailto:stmcov@gmail.com)**