

Return to Church Services.

The government has said that churches can re-open for public worship from Saturday 4th July if they can do so safely. We are very much looking forward to being able to welcome you.

At St Mark's we are able to comply with the law, guidance from the government, The Church of England and the Diocese so that some of us can meet safely for a service of Holy Communion this Sunday 5th July and we hope to continue with Sunday services thereafter. (We will release further information about this in due course).

We recognise that some people will not want to join us for public worship at the moment. There is no pressure for anyone to do so until they feel ready and can do so safely.

Some who are clinically extremely vulnerable will have been given government guidance on shielding or will have received a letter from their GP and are not currently advised to attend places of worship. We would strongly discourage you from doing so. Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) should not attend. You should not attend if you are self-isolating due to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 in your household, or because they have been requested to do so by NHS Test & Trace. Further details can be found via: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Those aged over 70 or with a particular vulnerability are encouraged to be especially conscious of the [current stay alert and social distancing guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing) and may choose not to attend. We respect your personal decision and encourage everyone to stay safe.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

In addition to the Online service will be available on Facebook and the website and we also hope to record the church service and upload it later on Sunday.

We want to explain a bit about some of the safety measures we have in place and what the service will be like.

We will have the church well cleaned. To reduce the risk of infection, the church will normally be locked for 72 hours before and after the service.

If you plan to attend, please wash your thoroughly hands at home before and after the service. We would also ask you to use your own **70% plus alcohol hand gel** or the hand gel we provide on arriving and departing in the required way.

Please try to avoid touching your face. Cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into the crook of your sleeved arm if a tissue is not available.

We ask you to **maintain a safe distance of at least 2 metres at all times between households** (social bubbles count as part of one household for these purposes). The church building will be set out for social distancing with chairs spread out as appropriate. If several members of one household wish to sit together we will try and accommodate that but will need to be sensitive to others.

In the unlikely event that we reach the maximum safe capacity, those who arrive last will be asked to leave. If we find this is an issue, we will look at introducing a booking system.

Please respect any requests from stewards and church officers.

Please seek to minimise what you touch and avoid moving around the building unnecessarily.

The evidence is not strong for **face coverings**. It seems they provide some protection to others if used correctly but not to the wearer. The use of a face covering should not be thought to justify laxity with regard to other precautions. You may wish to use a well-fitting face covering over your

mouth and nose. This is a matter of personal choice. If you choose to use a face covering, we recommend reading the government advice about their design and use.

Once the service is over, the government advice is that, "participants should be encouraged to move on promptly, to minimise the risk of contact and spread of infection." If you want to speak to others, it would be better to do that outside rather than lingering in the building. You will recall that when you are outside you can meet in groups of up to six people from different households, following social distancing guidelines but it is safer to keep this to a minimum.

We would of course encourage you to continue to keep in touch online and over the phone.

At the end of the service the fire exit to Carlisle Street will also be opened to try and avoid congestion at the main entrance.

We will not be giving out or making available any hymn books or Bibles. You may wish to bring your own Bible from home and take it away with you afterwards. We will not be singing as this is an infection risk. We will also avoid raising our voices and we will not play loud music so that no one is likely to try to shout over it. The responses in the service should be said with a slightly quiet voice, not a raised one, please.

We will be administering Communion but this will be bread alone. Already cut into pieces and kept covered until the time it is required. We will not be sharing the peace and the bread will be brought to you in your seat. So that we minimise the number of people moving about and adding to the risk.

We will not be taking a **collection** during the service. There will be a basket available for cash donations (which you should avoid touching) but we would prefer people to give by Standing Order. Please contact us if you would like to set this up. You can also send us a cheque.

Children and young people are always very welcome at our services. Children should be supervised by their parent or guardian at all times. Please explain the social distancing and hygiene precautions to your children and ensure that they comply with them. We are sorry but we cannot make any special provision for children.

Although this is not mandatory, in line with government guidance, and so that we can assist **the NHS Test and Trace Service**, like other venues including in the retail and hospitality sector, we will seek to keep an accurate temporary record of those who attend for 21 days, in a way that is manageable us. We will aim to comply with data protection legislation. We will ask you for your name and surname and a contact phone number if we do not already have this information. We will not use this information for any other purpose.

Government guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july>

The latest Church of England guidance can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

We will of course keep what we are doing under review and we may be able to learn from experience and adapt. We will also make any necessary changes if the guidance changes. If you have any other queries, please do contact me.

I very much look forward to seeing those of you who are able to join us.