

Cautious Re-opening of Churches for Public Worship

The Archbishop will give permission for churches to re-open for Mass and other public services beginning on **Monday 6th July** under the strict conditions set out below for the prevention of infection and the protection of those attending.

Permissions will be reversed should rates of infection rise. This is not a return to business as usual.

1. Each church will have a limited number of people (agreed with the Dean) who can be in the building.
2. If there is more than one church in a parish it is advisable to just get one ready at this time.
3. There should be no concelebrating at a public Mass.
4. Do not be too quick to give up on the use of live-streaming.
5. **A church can only be opened for Mass once it has been made ready** and has been approved by the Dean either in person or by viewing a photo of the arrangements which will also be sent to Kevin Harvey k.harvey@rcaol.org.uk. Signage provided by the Diocese must be used. A risk assessment and other documentation must be completed and returned to the Dean.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

- The vulnerable should carefully consider the wisdom of returning to Mass too soon. They are not obliged to do so. The Sunday obligation has not been re-instated.
- Those who are able might be encouraged to gather on a weekday rather than a Saturday evening or Sunday, to release the pressure on weekend Masses.
- Social distancing guidelines are still in force.
- Every 2nd row must be closed off.
- Church doors and windows should be left open.
- Volunteer stewards are required to be on hand to direct hand sanitising on arriving and leaving, to direct people to benches and to encourage worshippers to maintain reasonable social distancing.
- Votive candles may be lit (but only from a lit candle.)
- Single use newsletters, Mass sheets, or other papers may be used but must be taken home.
- Only the priest should be on the sanctuary – without deacons, servers, readers etc.
- There will be no Sign of Peace.
- There will be no singing.
- There should be no handshakes or hugs etc. after services.
- Collections should be in a basket on the way in and the way out.
- Lingering clusters of conversation in the porch or outside the church are to be avoided.
- Volunteers are required to sanitise bench surfaces and doors etc. after each Mass. That may mean the number of Masses needs to be reduced.
- To avoid volunteers having to sanitise toilets after each individual use, they must remain closed and only be used in a genuine emergency.

FACEMASKS:

- People coming to Church will have to wear a facemask, which they will be permitted to lower to receive Holy Communion.

HOLY COMMUNION:

- Holy Communion will be given as the Sacred Host only.
- If a ciborium or open ciborium is to be consecrated it must be lidded or covered with a paten.

- The priest will wear a visor while distributing Holy Communion and sanitise his hands before and after distribution. If the priest needs help with the distribution of Communion (or if he is shielding) a Deacon or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion can assist (having used gel and wearing a visor.)
- Holy Communion will be distributed **after the final dismissal of the Mass.**
- The priest will receive Holy Communion at the usual point of Mass.
- The words: “The Body of Christ. Amen” will only be said once at the beginning of distribution. They are not to be repeated for each communicant.
- Communicants will be directed to approach the altar and then leave the church directly after receiving Holy Communion **without returning to their benches.**
- Parishioners should avoid bringing shopping or other large personal items to church in order to avoid returning to their places after receiving.
- Volunteer stewards will moderate the flow of those queuing for Holy Communion.
- Communicants are instructed to approach with arms outstretched in order to maintain a reasonable distance from the minister.
- Reception of Holy Communion on the tongue is not permitted.
- Communicants must avoid skin to skin contact with the minister’s hands. If contact happens the minister is to pause and sanitise his hands.
- Communicants should deliberately step to one side and then place the Sacred Host in their mouth and then follow directions to leave the church.

FUNERALS:

- A Funeral Service of the Word and Commendation can take place in any Church that is ready for opening from Monday 6th July.
- To prevent the possibility of infections spreading these should be small family gatherings, bearing in mind the agreed safe capacity of the church.
- Coffins cannot be touched and must not have any objects placed on them.
- Holy Water may be used, but not incense.

BAPTISMS:

- Baptisms can take place in any church that is ready for opening.
- To prevent the possibility of infections spreading these should be small family gatherings, bearing in mind the agreed safe capacity of the church.
- Cotton wool can be used for the anointing (but these can be omitted if desired)
- There will be no ‘Ephphatha’ prayer.
- The child will be held by the parents and the minister will pour water at arm’s length.
- At this time there are to be no baptism courses – some written material can be provided.

WEDDINGS:

- Weddings Services can take place in any church that is ready for opening.
- There are to be no more than 30 people present. (This is to adhere to present Government Guidelines.)

RECONCILIATION:

- Material from the Bishop’s Conference, with guidelines for the celebration of Confession will be sent out in the next few days.