

19th July 2021

As we emerge from lockdown we recognise that we have all been through a difficult time. Our worship has been severely curtailed in many ways and we look forward to a time when we can celebrate Mass and the Sacraments in a more normal manner.

Since last summer, our parish has been able to open for limited times and restricted numbers. Making this possible has been a team of dedicated parishioners acting as stewards and cleaners. As ever, so much goes on in the background that is largely unseen. During the pandemic there have been so many people who have made it possible for us to gather for Mass by stewarding and guiding our people, by cleaning and sanitising our church. All this is part of the great Ministry of Welcome.

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales have issued Covid-19 Route Map Step 4 Guidance, effective tomorrow 19th July. The guidance can be viewed on www.cbcew.org.uk

Here in St Mary's, we will be cautious over the coming weeks in returning the church to its full capacity.

From next week you will gradually see there will be an increased limit on places within the online booking system. We are keeping the booking system in place for track and trace purposes, please tick your name off the sheet on entry. If you do not book, you will be asked to scan the QR code through the NHS App on entry or write your details on a slip and place in the Attendance box.

The area under the Organ Loft will be reserved for a reduced capacity with social distancing for **2m**.

For other areas, should you wish to have some space between you and other people, please pick up a simple card from the front which states "Please leave a Space" and put it beside you which will inform others to allow for distancing.

We strongly recommend that those attending mass continue to wear a face covering as a mark of respect for one another's health. While the virus can land on surfaces and can infect people if they touch those surfaces and then touch their mouth, nose or eyes, this risk is significantly lower than the risk from aerosol or droplet spread which is mitigated against with good ventilation and a face covering.

Hand sanitiser will continue to be available.

We will gradually reintroduce singing. However, those who choose to sing must wear a face covering while singing.

The physical Sign of Peace will remain suspended.

The offertory collection can be resumed in church with baskets.

It is recommended that Holy Communion continues to be received on the hand.

The obligation to attend mass on a Sunday continues to be suspended and will be until well into the autumn.

Churches can be left open and unsupervised for individual prayer during times when there are no public acts of worship.

The Church will be open from 10am until 8pm on a Monday and Wednesday as long as those visiting the Church scan the QR code through the NHS App on entry or write your details on a slip and place in the Attendance box.

It is no longer necessary to have one-way systems or other restrictions on movement in churches from this time onward. People should exercise good responsible behaviour especially when moving to receive Holy Communion during Mass and should avoid getting too close to each other. During the last year, it has been lovely that the receiving of the Holy Communion has not been rushed with pew by pew coming up to the front. If we find that Parishioners choose to ignore this procedure, we may have to ask Stewards to return to be an usher during Communion.

Stewards will no longer be necessary to show people to designated seats etc. However, a welcoming presence at the church door is a valuable sign of hospitality, and stewards will remain at weekend Masses only to welcome you and assist in the cleaning of frequently used touch points within the church building.

We have a shared responsibility to be sensitive to the anxiousness many feel at this time.