

REOPENING OF ST JAMES'S CHURCH FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

– MANDATORY GUIDANCE FOR CONGREGATION

We have spent a lot of time evaluating what is safe and what is not when reopening church. We completely understand that some of you will think that our conclusions are “over the top” but we are equally aware that others are very nervous about joining public worship in St James's.

At the outset can we emphasise that anyone who has an ongoing or recent health concern, and especially those who are elderly, have been self-isolating or shielding should think very carefully before entering church. All the current evidence suggests that the risk of contracting coronavirus infection is greater when entering a building with others as compared with meeting them, at a distance, outdoors.

SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS INFECTION

The main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Most people with coronavirus infection have at least one of these symptoms.

If you have any of the above symptoms, to protect others, you should not attend church but do let us know so that we can keep in contact and help you in any way we can. Also, if you develop any of these symptoms within two weeks of having attended worship at St James's you must let us know immediately.

ARRIVING AT CHURCH

- When you arrive at St James's we do ask you to socially distance (2 metres) from other members of the congregation in the car park, or when walking on Church Lane, when waiting to enter church and also when leaving church and making your way home. The only exception is when you arrive or meet other members of your immediate household.
- Wearing a face covering when in church is mandatory. This will normally be a mask which must cover both your nose and mouth. Some people do not have to wear face coverings. It is your responsibility to comply with current Government guidance but currently exemptions include those not able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, and children under 11 years of age.

- You must use hand sanitiser on entering church. Preferably use your own sanitiser gel which you carry with you or if that is not available use ours which is located beside the font, in the baptistry. Be careful not to touch any other surfaces when applying, or after having applied, sanitiser.
- All external and internal doors in church will be left open during services. This is to improve ventilation but also means that you do not need to touch doors or door handles when you enter or move around within church.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Social distancing rules apply to worship held inside and outside church and in the graveyards.
- Government guidance is that 2 metres social distancing is best practice although this can be reduced in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances but only when special precautions are taken. All the planning we have done allows for 2 metres social distancing whilst you are in church and because we know that this is achievable this is the standard we will follow. We have marked the flooring with tape to help you.
- Please take special care to observe 2 metres social distancing on arriving and leaving church. It is senseless to follow the rules that we are imposing for your safety inside church but ignore social distancing prior to entering and on leaving the building.
- There is a one-way system operating in church. You must enter through the Nave door and at the end of the service you must leave by the Transept door. Instructions will be given at the beginning of each service.
- When you enter church you will see that you are only permitted to sit in designated, (alternate), pews which are identified by a green sign with a tick. This is important as without alternating the pews on each side of the Nave we cannot achieve adequate social distancing.
- You must not sit in pews marked by a red sign with a cross.
- Only two people per pew are allowed, one sitting beside the wall and the other beside the aisle, except when the two people are from the same household in which case they can sit together but towards the wall not the aisle. It may be possible for another family member to sit with you in the same pew but we will advise you on an individual basis, when you arrive at church.
- It is anticipated that only the Nave will be open to congregation initially, while we assess safety and compliance.
- When you enter church you must sit in the next available pew starting from the FRONT. This means that the first to arrive must sit at the very front of the Nave, in the first designated pew, rather than in a pew towards the back which they may have favoured in the past.
- At the end of the service everyone will exit via the Transept, we ask that you leave church in the order that you sat down ie with alternating pews on each side of the Nave leaving in order, from the front. When leaving your pew you must maintain 2 metres social distancing from those in front and those behind you as you leave church through the Transept door.
- You must use hand sanitiser before leaving church. Preferably use your own sanitiser gel which you carry with you or if that is not available use ours which is

located on the table in the transept close to the internal door. As already mentioned, be careful not to touch any other surfaces when applying, or after having applied, sanitiser.

ATTENDING SERVICES

- In line with Government guidance, we need to record details of everyone who attends a service in church. This will help others if someone proves coronavirus positive and there is a need to identify others who may have been in contact.
- Also, in order to maintain social distancing, pew spaces are limited and we need to ensure that we can offer you seating before you arrive.
- For these reasons we must ask that you pre-book your intention to attend a Sunday service no later than the preceding Wednesday night. To book your attendance please
Telephone Ren or Margaret Reed on 01434 682691. (When you telephone you will be asked to provide your contact details).
- We can then let you know whether there will be space for you in church that week. Bookings will be taken on a first come basis.
- If the service offers eucharist then special rules apply especially relating to receiving sacrament and exiting church, These rules will be explained to you at the start of the service. Most importantly, you must observe the 2 metres social distancing rule at all times, when moving within the Nave aisle, when entering the Chancel and when receiving communion.

TRANSEPT PEWS

- If we cannot meet demand for service attendance through use of the Nave alone then we have evaluated how we could open the Transept for additional pew spaces. It is important to appreciate that use of the Transept does complicate the one-way system and entering and leaving church safely. It also poses problems with social distancing.
- Before opening the Transept to the congregation on a regular basis, we want to be reassured that our guidelines are indeed addressing your and our safety and that we are achieving full compliance both inside and outside church.
- If we need to open the Transept to create additional pews for you then specific instructions will be given when you pre-book your attendance and/ or when you arrive at church. Also, these guidelines will be amended if this is a regular requirement.

Thank you. We know that all of this is extremely tedious but we cannot take risks with your safety which is, and will always be, our main priority.

Best wishes as always.

The Churchwarden Team.