

THE GUIDANCE OF THE BISHOPS OF ENGLAND AND WALES: - a brief overview:

- From 19th July it is recommended we continue to provide **sanitiser at entrances and exits to our churches; good ventilation, encourage the wearing of face coverings and maintain general cleaning to a good standard.**
- Great care has been taken to ensure people feel safe in our churches. Decisions will need to be made locally regarding **capacity and social distancing**. Some suggestions are offered for the many and varied situations of our churches with the aim of building local confidence. This is something we will need to continue reflecting upon.
- **Stewarding will no longer be required.** This may be a time to consider re-directing the wonderful service of the teams of dedicated, parish stewards for which we have all been grateful.
- **Congregational singing** is permitted from 19th July; however, it is recommended **this be phased in gradually and face coverings continue to be worn** by members of the congregation whilst singing until infection levels reduce. I am not sure how this will exactly work in practice.
- Churches can be open for private prayer without stewarding though **QR codes should remain in place**. As long as **NHS Test, Track and Trace** is in operation churches are asked to continue using the available means for people to sign in.
- It is recommended that **Holy Water Stoops should not be refilled** at this point though Holy Water can be made available to the Faithful.
- **Servers, Cantors, Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion can be fully deployed** as needed.
- **The Offertory Collection can be resumed with baskets and pouches**; however, online and contactless giving is encouraged if possible.
- **The Sign of Peace remains suspended in the Liturgy of the Mass** to reduce physical contact between members of the congregation.
- **Holy Communion will continue under one kind with no administration of the Chalice.** Ministers are asked to sanitise their hands and wear face coverings as before. Holy Communion is still recommended on the hand though all who wish to receive on the tongue may do so with special care being taken. **It is no longer necessary to have a one-way system or other restrictions on movement within our churches. Holy Communion by Concelebrants** (including the Principal Celebrant) **should be received only by intinction** and the purification of the sacred vessels undertaken by the principal celebrant alone.
- For the celebration of **Baptism** there are no restrictions on numbers though **multiple Baptisms should be avoided**.
- For the celebration of **Marriages** there is no restriction on numbers.
- For **Funerals** there is no restriction on numbers though liaison with the Funeral Directors over local conditions and regulations at the place of committal will need to continue.
- For the **Sacrament of the Anointing** the laying of hands should be by extension of the hands over the sick person and the sign of peace should be a gesture without touch. In a hospital or care home advice should be followed regarding the PPE required. The requirement to be vaccinated to regularly visit care homes is expected to come into force in October and a separate note will be published in due course.
- For **Parish Social Activities** it is strongly recommended that a Risk Assessment be completed for both the activity and the space.
- For **Catechesis** requirements for Covid security should be determined locally and a combination of in-person online sessions where appropriate, is recommended.