

Worshipping Safely during the Pandemic

Over recent weeks churches across the Diocese have been opening for worship, having first carried out a thorough risk assessment. As regulations are constantly being updated we thought it would be useful to remind you of the basic guidance that will help to keep us all as safe as we can be.

The most up to date guidance can always be found on the Church in Wales website at <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>.

The basic rules that we need to keep in all aspects of our life underpin the opening of our churches – 2m social distancing and regular hand washing or sanitising. To this has recently been added the need for everyone to wear a face covering in indoor public spaces, including places of worship, unless there are legitimate medical reasons for you not to do so. The Welsh Government have also said: “*We consider that those leading worship or a ceremony may have a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering if they cannot effectively do so while wearing one, as long as they have taken other sufficient mitigations such as staying continually over 2 metres away from others and/or wearing a visor.*” We will leave clergy and worship leaders to apply this as they feel appropriate but recommend that you wear a face covering when administering communion and when moving through the church before and after the service.

The celebrating and administering of communion is a particular area that needs careful planning with many of our usual ways of operating not appropriate at the moment. Full guidance on celebrating communion can be found at: <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/guidance-celebrating-holy-communion/>. We strongly advise all clergy make sure they are familiar with these regulations and apply them at all times.

There are two sections that we would particularly draw to your attention:

Q. What elements can be offered to communicants?

A. At present, Communion should be administered in one kind only with no sharing of the common cup. The president alone should always take the wine, consuming all that has been consecrated; other communicants should receive the bread only, in the hand. As the Liturgical and Faith and Order Commissions have made clear, this is still ‘complete communion’. In order to minimise overall risk, intinction (dipping the bread into the wine) should not be practised.

Q. Should the altar rails be used?

A. We suggest that in order to avoid touching it and to maintain physical distancing, communicants should not come to kneel at the altar rail, but instead they should form a line maintaining two metres’ distance to receive the bread, standing, from the priest. It may also be possible for the priest to take communion to people in their seats. The details of how this will be enacted will depend on the local situation, particularly the layout of the building.

If you have any questions around any issues around the re-opening of churches then please contact your Archdeacon.