

Sunday Service Arrangements for tomorrow 12th July 2020 Trinity 5

Dear All

Service times

Tomorrow morning we start the process of a phased reopening our church buildings beginning with a service at All Saints, Saughall at 9.30am and St Oswald, Backford at 11.15am. This is not a grand reopening but a rather an opportunity to dip a toe in the water. I will be taking services at these times and anyone who would like to is welcome to join me.

The plan for next Sunday is to introduce the 8am at St Oswald and 11.15am at Holy Trinity.

Service times next week will be an 8am at St Oswald, 9.30am All Saints and 11.15am at Holy Trinity, Capenhurst. Rev Stephen Attwood has offered to take the 11.15am at St Oswald so with his help we will be able to offer a full programme of services.

On future weeks running 11.15am services at St Oswald's and Holy Trinity on the Sundays when I am not present will be entirely dependant on the availability of retired clergy and Readers many of whom continue to be shielding. The position will become clearer over the next week or so as we start to make bookings.

I would be grateful if we all take into consideration that the process of reopening will be experimental in nature. We will only discover how many of our own congregation are happy to risk gathering together for worship as events unfold. Time will tell whether numbers are too large and we have to increase the numbers of services, or too few and need to amalgamate times and venues in the short term. It is inevitable that there is going to have to be flexibility with arrangements on a week by week basis during this transition period. Everyone will want to take holiday now that lockdown is lifting so that will impact numbers attending in August. I think we have to expect that the time between now and the end of September will be in a state of flux, and then settle down to a more expected routine. My intention is to plan for consistency then adjust as necessary. At this stage I am expecting the programme to resume at the usual times.

Online Services

I will continue to produce online services but they will now be videoed from church during the Sunday morning services. This means there will not be an online Sunday morning service as I will be editing on Sunday afternoon. After editing, the process of rendering the video and uploading very large files takes about two hours provided nothing goes wrong. Online services should be published and viewable from Sunday evening.

Nature of Meeting

To avoid long notices please take note of the following. The sooner we can adopt new practices the less obtrusive they will become.

Communion

We are now permitted to gather to celebrate communion within certain restrictions. The congregation will have the option for either a blessing or to receive communion 'in one kind' with a wafer only. The priest leading communion will take the wine on behalf of everyone. To maintain physical distancing of 2m between households communion will be distributed by queuing in the main body of the church rather than the altar rail. The priest will be the only person to handle the wafers at any point to minimise risk. They will also be asked to wear a mask during the administration while contact distance is reduced.

Singing

As yet we can't sing indoors but this is under revision. Weather permitting we will start our service with a hymn in the churchyard before proceeding into the building together.

Masks

People are welcome to wear masks. These are as much for other people's benefit as your own. I will wear a mask at points where there is a risk of close mixing but remove it when I am speaking at a distance from the front.

Gel

Hand gel will be available at the welcome desk and I will use gel on entering the building and before touching the wafers.

The Peace

The Peace cannot be physically shared but I am sure we can adopt a 'holy wave'.

Giving

The collection plate will not be passed round but will be available as you enter church. Handling of cash puts other people at risk so please take out a bankers order if you possibly can. We understand that people will want to bring their backdated envelopes over the next few weeks but a single cheque would be much more preferable than cash that has been handled by many other people before you.

Parish finances have taken a huge hit over the last few months. We will only be able to assess the longer term damage after the next few weeks as people return to church. Expenses have continued during lockdown and income has largely evaporated.

2m Distancing

Old habits die hard especially in a familiar environment but please remember that 2m physical distancing remains necessary. Please don't take offence if someone becomes anxious that you are coming too close. You may not be worried, but they might have good reason to be for the sake of shielding vulnerable others as well as themselves. Please be very conscious of crowd pinch-points when entering, moving round and leaving the building. Please do everything you can to give other people plenty of space and take your seat as soon as you can to make space for others behind you.

Refreshments

As you may expect - serving refreshments and after service fellowship are not possible at this stage.

Orders of Service

At All Saints these will be on the screen. At Holy Trinity & St Oswald I will produce paper copies. These have to be one use only unless people retain their copy and bring it back on subsequent weeks. Any left behind will have to be discarded so please do everything you can to save the environment and minimise printing. The burden of printing multiple services is one of the main reasons for needing to do a phased return. Each church is being given £2,000 grant and my hope is that the PCCs will take the opportunity to use this to upgrade our technology facilities.

Overcrowding

We need to be aware that some of our folk may have been unable to access online services and haven't participated in a church service since March. Turning away such people at the door would be a tragedy. If gathering numbers become uncomfortable it would be immensely honourable if those able to watch the service later made an offer to the churchwarden to leave space and slip away quietly before the service starts. There will be treasure in heaven for the servant hearted - but don't all rush at once!

Symptoms

Please, please, please do not come to church if you start to display any symptoms or have been in contact with anyone who has. If you are on duty and are unable to contact anyone at the last minute it is better to default than brave it. This precaution is not only for the safety of others but there is another serious issue as regards the use of the building. If the church building is contaminated by someone coming with COVID-19 symptoms Public Health may require us to quarantine the building for 72 hours. It would be very difficult and disruptive to have to find alternative venues for a funeral at no notice and a Sunday Service could also be put in jeopardy. It is better if we go without than take a risk. Cancellation is better than determination. I am aware this could include me as much as anyone else.

We will do everything we can to resume a safe, regular and consistent pattern of worship at our churches. Risk assessments have been completed according to the requirements.

I look forward to seeing as many as feel able to join us tomorrow.

Yours in Christ
Canon Steve