

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

I have attached the guidance given by the Church of England about re-opening of church and Holy Communion. These are the guidelines that we are working to and can be found on the diocesan website. A simplified version is on our service sheet and how it looks in practice at St. Margaret's Church can be seen on [facebook.com.StMaggieP](https://www.facebook.com/StMaggieP).

Re-opening of Church

- An advisory 'cap' of 30 has been set for weddings and other 'stand-alone' services such as baptism and confirmation if not conducted during 'routine communal worship'.
- There is no numerical 'cap' on other services, but social distancing and Public Health requirements must be met.
- The two-metre 'rule' applies for public worship except in situations where closer contact cannot be avoided; extra Public Health precautions must then be taken.
- Consideration should be given to keeping numbers below the maximum possible to further minimise risk.
- Wearing of face-coverings is voluntary.
- While those at extra risk and the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' should be advised of the risks of attending public worship, a *decision* to do so is theirs alone.
- Government guidance includes a request for names of attendees to be recorded and kept for 21 days to assist 'track and trace' if required (further details from the government are expected to help).
- Singing, chanting and playing of brass or woodwind instruments are not recommended, but a further update will follow soon.
- Detailed instructions on 'consumables' suggest that services of Holy Communion can be held if specific guidance is followed, including the continued suspension of the Common Cup (see the guidance document on Holy Communion).

Holy Communion

COVID-19 Advice on the Administration of Holy Communion Issue Date Version Issued by 1st July 2020 3 The House of Bishops Recovery Group The Recovery Group has been set up to support the Church of England as government guidance changes through the COVID-19 pandemic. This document has been prepared with information available by the issue date. It will be kept under review and updated as the situation develops, with each update issued as a new version. The current version will always be available to download from the Church of England website via the Coronavirus FAQs page.

This advice note seeks to enable Holy Communion to be celebrated in a safe and appropriate way. It includes practical steps in the administration of Holy Communion, as well as guidance on the practice of Holy Communion provided by members of the Liturgical Commission and the Faith & Order Commission which relates both to public worship and to live-streaming. Where either priests or parishioners have concerns about participating in a

service of Holy Communion, it is important that no pressure is placed on priests to preside at Holy Communion or on parishioners to receive the Sacrament.

This advice should be read alongside the guidance for Using Church Buildings for Public Worship and Individual Prayer and Advice on the Conduct of Public Worship found here.

Q. Can we celebrate Holy Communion with our congregations in church buildings?

A. Yes, subject to a number of important conditions outlined below.

Q. Are we able to share the Peace?

A. Unfortunately, in order to minimise risk, there should be no sharing of the Peace through physical contact.

Q. What hygiene measures should be followed when handling the Eucharistic elements?

A. Government guidance indicates that ministers should not speak over uncovered 'consumables'. In practice, this means that while the president can speak the words of the Eucharistic Prayer over bread and wine that he or she alone will consume, bread that will be consumed by other communicants must remain covered until being distributed (e.g. wafers in a ciborium with the lid on or covered by a pall, or bread on a paten covered by a purificator or other cloth). For the time being we encourage the use of individual communion wafers or bread that has already been divided rather than large wafers or loaves of bread that are broken and shared, as this practice minimises the physical contact the president will have with the elements. It is also advised that the president be the only person to handle the wafers or bread during the distribution, unless there are very large numbers, and that individual communicants should not pass around wafers or bread. 2

Version 3 – issued 1 st July 2020 If others assist in preparing the elements before or during the service, then hand hygiene and physical distancing precautions should apply. Offertory processions where the bread and wine are brought to the Communion table are not recommended at this time. When the president takes the bread and wine before the Eucharistic Prayer, it is recommended that this takes place in silence. If words are said when the bread and wine are taken into the hand, only the elements that the president will receive are taken (the other elements being covered). At the fraction (breaking of the bread), only the consecrated bread that the president will receive is broken during the words ('We break this bread...' 'Every time we eat this bread...') accompanying that action. The remainder of the bread remains covered. If other consecrated bread needs to be broken before it is administered, this must be done in silence or while the Agnus Dei is said by the congregation and after the priest has sanitized their hands. At the invitation to communion, if the consecrated bread and wine are shown to the people, only the piece of consecrated bread or wafer that the president will receive is shown while speaking the words of invitation. At the giving of Communion, the president receives Communion in both kinds. The words of distribution ('The body and blood of Christ' or 'The body and blood of Christ keep you in eternal life' or the Order Two/BCP words of distribution) are spoken to the congregation, and all who intend to receive say, 'Amen'. At the distribution, Holy

Communion is administered in silence. The consecrated bread or wafer will need to be dropped into the hands of communicants.

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. When should the priest and communicants sanitize their hands?

A. The priest should sanitise their hands before administering the consecrated bread. Each communicant should also be encouraged to sanitise their hands before receiving the bread. The bread should only be administered into the hand with care being taken by the president not to touch communicants' hands. If this does happen, both the president and communicant should sanitise their hands immediately.

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. The details of how this will be enacted will depend on the local situation, particularly the layout of the building.

Q. How can the president maintain physical distancing when administering the bread?

A. We recognise that it will not be possible to maintain the ideal distance of two metres for the brief time that the priest administers the sacrament. However, the risk associated with this is relatively low, especially if face-coverings are worn. Where either priests or parishioners are uncomfortable with this, it is important that no pressure is placed on priests to preside at Holy Communion or on parishioners to receive the Sacrament.

Q. What about face coverings?

A. The evidence on face coverings is not strong and suggests that the benefit is not to the wearer but to others for any potential infection by the wearer. Current government advice states that it is up to each individual to decide whether they wish to wear a face covering.

Q. How can we clean the chalice and paten?

A. If the priest is the only person who will touch the chalice and paten both during the service and after, then they can be cleaned in the normal way. If others may touch the chalice and/or paten, either during the service or after, then they should either be washed in warm water with liquid soap, or if this is not possible, stored safely on their own for at least 72 hours before using again, in case they have been infected with the virus -surfaces.

Q. Can we reserve the Sacrament?

A. Churches which reserve the Sacrament may do so. The priest should place the consecrated bread in the vessel for reservation. It should not be consumed or distributed for 72 hours by anyone other than the priest who reserved it.