

Information for the congregation

Welcome back! After what will have been 16 weeks without a church gathering of any kind, we are so looking forward to getting our services started again.

There is much to give thanks to God for in recent weeks.... low numbers of Covid cases in the South West, wonderful neighbourliness expressed across our community, amazing weather (until recently), and a beautiful county to be stuck in during lockdown. Things could have been so much worse. Nevertheless, it has been hard too... a lonely and worrying time for many, with anxieties about day-to day life and work, relatives far away that we cannot see, and very real health concerns for some of us. Some of these issues will continue for many months.

But it is great that lockdown is now easing, and I know many of you cannot wait to meet together again for services. Having said that, we fully understand that some church members will feel the need to stay away for a while longer. For this reason, we will continue to post services online.

For those returning to church services and other church gatherings over the next few weeks, there are a number of simple things we all need to do so that we can return to church as safely as possible.

Please note, all of our churches have been thoroughly cleaned, and will be cleaned after every service.

1. Before you come to church

- If you or anyone in your household has any SYMPTOMS of coronavirus, or has had them anytime in the previous two weeks, please do not come to church. (Symptoms include a temperature, a persistent new cough, loss of taste and/or smell.)
- WASH YOUR HANDS thoroughly as the last thing you do before leaving home. (This is the single most effective way of reducing virus transfer.)
- You may wish to wear gloves and/or a facemask.

2. As you arrive at church

- Please use the alcohol HAND SANITISING rub in the church porch as you arrive.
- Please follow the one-way system in place (only applies to St Peter's NT)
- No hugs or handshakes!

3. During services and other gatherings...

- Please avoid congregating in close groups. Eg. near the church door or at the end of aisles.
- Please SIT APART (2m) from other households. This means either one household per pew, or individuals/couples at either end of a pew. In Sampford Courtenay, this means two chairs gap between households.
- Please avoid sitting immediately behind or in front of other people.

COMMUNION services will be with bread only for the foreseeable future, with the bread administered in the aisle.

There will be no REFRESHMENTS served after services this summer, but do bring your own thermos if you wish.

The FIRST FEW WEEKS of services will be simplified and shortened to give more time for people to see each other and catch up.

We will be reducing the amount of SINGING we normally do.

(There is minimal risk from touching hymnbooks, orders of service and church Bibles because none are used more regularly than once a week.)

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN – please bring your own toys and resources for your children to use in church. Sunday Club at St Peter's will not restart until the autumn, although the Mortimer Room and side pews can still be used as breakout space for families to do activities with their own children during services.

5. Leaving church

- Please use the hand sanitizer rub in the porch when you leave.
- Wash your hands thoroughly as soon as you get home.
- If you get unwell and test positive for Covid-19, and you have been to a church service in the preceding two weeks, then it is essential you inform Nick, Rita or one of the church wardens.