

The Parish Church of
St Michael *and* All Angels
B E E T H A M

in the Kent Estuary Mission Community



Guidelines for Public Worship

from August 2021

'Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.'

(Philippians 2.3-5)

Following the lifting of all legal restrictions around the Coronavirus pandemic by the Government on Monday 19 July, the Standing Committee have met to discuss and reflect on the best way for us, as a church community, to move forward.

The Church of England has issued guidance to help us make our own arrangements around public worship, which are to be interpreted and implemented at a local level. Yet, with this change brings the need to plan and prepare sensitively and considerately. As the Bishop of Carlisle has said: *'caution and respect for those who are anxious about this further lifting need to be uppermost in all of our minds'*. Such an attitude of prudence and carefulness has been important to us since the initial easing of restrictions last year, seeking to do all that we can for the welfare and well-being of each other.

The easing of restrictions has brought with it mixed feelings amongst many: fear, anxiety, caution, uncertainty, excitement, relief and joy. Some have been looking forward to freedoms they have not enjoyed for many months. Others feel vulnerable and are keen to continue to take sensible precautions. It is clear from an ever-changing local, national and global situation that the pandemic has not simply gone away. The daily case numbers continue to remain high and for the time being this will continue to make an impact on our lives and choices.

As such, the Standing Committee has judged that it is wise to remain vigilant over the coming weeks, keeping many of the restrictions whilst gently relaxing others in line with our updated Risk Assessment. We will review this position in early September, continuing to take careful steps as the best way forward is discerned in ensuring St Michael and All Angels remains a welcoming and safe place to pray and worship together.

Face Coverings

As our church building is an indoor space, wearing face coverings is strongly recommended. We would encourage you continue to wearing face coverings inside the building, unless you are leading part of the service, a member of a choir when singing, or have a good reason not to do so. This is important in both protecting and being sensitive towards the concerns of others.

Hand Sanitiser

This will be available throughout the church building. We will continue to encourage good hand hygiene and ask that it is used at the entrance/exit to the building and for the distribution of Holy Communion.

Social Distancing

We are going to maintain the current seating arrangements in the church building, so that social distancing can continue to be encouraged. We would ask everyone attending public worship to be aware of who you are sitting next to and how comfortable they may feel. Please also endeavour to practice social distancing when moving around the church building, or when talking to or socialising with others.

Test and Trace

We are, for the moment, still expected to keep a record of those attending public worship for the purposes of NHS Test and Trace. Consequently, we will continue to keep a register of those attending services.

Singing

We recognise that singing is an intrinsic and much-loved part of our worship and give thanks that the choir have been able to lead our singing over recent weeks. We are therefore proposing that from Sunday 8 August: the choir will no longer be restricted to six singers and the congregation will have the opportunity to join in the singing of the hymns (and eventually the eucharistic setting) whilst remaining seated and wearing a face covering. Hymn books will be placed in the pews and are to be left there at the end of the service.

Sharing the Peace

For the moment, we will continue to share the Peace with each other verbally and from a distance, without physical contact.

Holy Communion

All our current safety arrangements will remain in place for the time being. We will continue to receive Holy Communion in one kind only (consecrated bread) whilst standing.

Bell Ringing

Following the completion of a Risk Assessment, from Sunday 1 August the tower bells will be rung once again before the Parish Eucharist.

Ventilation, Cleaning and Refreshments

We will continue to keep the church building well ventilated before, during and after public worship as the weather permits. The building will continue to be routinely cleaned depending on its use through the week in line with the received guidance, ensuring that regular touched surfaces are cleaned regularly. We will continue to refrain from serving refreshments served after public worship for the time being.

Church Opening

The church building will continue to be open during the week on Wednesdays for private prayer, contemplation and visiting.