



Local Interpretation of the Guidance for “Step 4” of Easing of Restrictions for the Covid 19 pandemic. Updated 13th Oct 2021

Background:

The government has moved to “step 4 in its roadmap” of Covid-19 restrictions. The Church of England provides guidance for churches, available here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance#na>

The instruction is that the “incumbent” should assess the local risk and put in place the best guidance for communal worship and use of buildings.

Local levels of covid infection remain significant (along with other seasonal viral infections increasing.) Government, Scientists and the Church of England all advise extreme caution.

Each Parish has already carried out, and updated, risk assessments throughout the pandemic. This is now an additional guidance for this next phase. These measures are temporary and depend on the changing nature of the pandemic / future guidance received from Church and Government.

We still need to be meticulous, keeping good hand hygiene, maintaining distance as much as we can, and wearing masks to protect others. As Christians we remember the need to protect others as much as ourselves – we each take personal responsibility for this.

People should not enter our buildings if they have any Covid / Flu symptoms or are test-positive for Covid 19.

Masks:

We encourage everyone to continue to wear masks in church as much as possible – taking responsibility for protecting others around us.

Sanitising:

We ask everyone to sanitise their hands on entry and before receiving Holy Communion.

Distance and ventilation:

We will continue to encourage the use of alternate pews to keep distance but will leave worshippers to decide who they sit with and what distance to keep.

We will provide laminated signs (for collection at the entrance) for those who would prefer/need to keep distance from others, to place on the seat next to them indicating this.

We will try to allow good ventilation where possible.

Singing:

Singing is now permitted, but as an activity that spreads virus more than speaking, we encourage keeping masks on whilst singing.

The Peace:

We will continue to “share the peace” at a distance and avoid moving around the church building to do this. We discourage hand-shaking at this or other points of the service.

Surfaces / cleaning:

We will continue to maintain a good level of general cleaning in the buildings. Good hand hygiene helps reduce transfer of viruses.

Congregants may kneel / sit / stand as they wish during the services – still encouraged to keep the touching of any surfaces (eg pew backs and ends) to a minimum.

Refreshments:

Parish church wardens and PCC’s will decide locally when they are able to serve refreshments after services.

Any refreshments should be prepared and served by the minimum number of people possible, and servers should:

- a) maintain excellent hand hygiene
- b) wear masks when preparing and serving.
- c) There should be no “communal” spoons / jugs etc left out.
- d) Care will be needed in serving any food. Communal plates should not be left out, to avoid others breathing on or touching food.

A “one-way system” to collect refreshments and move away will help to avoid crowding around the refreshment areas.

Holy Communion:

Clergy continue to maintain excellent hand hygiene and wear a mask when preparing, blessing and distributing the elements of bread and wine.

They will continue to evaluate the best way to distribute the Sacrament to the congregation.

Test and Trace:

Records of attendees is no longer required

“Life Events” (weddings / baptisms / funerals)

These events carry the potential to be the most crowded within our buildings.

We will encourage those attending (and advise those organising in advance) of our current guidance and encourage them to maintain the same restrictions with their guests.

In the event of the minister not able to lead a service:

We have an “emergency” service-of-the-word booklet should the Minister be unable to lead a service at short notice. The church warden, or another person, should then lead the service.

Review date: 24th November 2021

Mary Styles, Incumbent, South Quantock Benefice. 13th October 2021

This guidance will be distributed to PCC’s, worship leaders, and others leading informal and formal activities in the church buildings and displayed publicly on church notice-boards.