

The Relaxing of Covid Restrictions from 19 July 2021

It is really good that our nation has reached the stage where government considers that from Monday 19th July it is safe for them to remove the legal regulations that have been in place for so long. We are really grateful to everyone for the way that our churches have responded to the pandemic – both the regulations and guidance - to protect each other throughout. Thank you.

As we write, we have not yet received official C of E guidance regarding the impact and changes that the lifting of all legal regulations will bring for our churches. What we do know is that after 19th July :

- Singing in church can be resumed
- Social distancing requirements can be relaxed
- Serving of refreshments and social gathering after church can be resumed
- There is no cap on numbers for communal worship/life events
- Coffee mornings and events in person can resume, though outside is preferable for the present

However, we are aware that there appears to be another significant wave of Covid infections affecting the country, including in our own area of East Devon. We do need to take personal responsibility for our actions and take care towards others. Each of our churches is encouraged to review our risk assessments, to continue to be cautious in protecting each other and especially the most vulnerable as we move forward.

For the present we therefore suggest that, whilst not mandatory, we encourage people to :

- Maintain the use of face coverings in church
- Maintain 'Track and Trace' registers/QR codes until at least 16 August (when rules regarding self isolation change)
- Maintain hand sanitiser/cleansing arrangements within churches and for services
- Where possible, set aside an area where voluntary social distancing can be maintained for those who wish it.
- Avoid attending services if feeling unwell though not Covid related eg with coughs and colds etc

Until we have guidance from the Church of England, we recommend that we maintain communion in one kind, and do not return to sharing the common cup. We will update this further once guidance is given centrally.

There will be many questions about how we proceed. The principles we are working to are that we want to be sensitive to the views of others, continue to protect everyone and especially the most vulnerable, and through careful risk assessment to open our worship to all with confidence and joy. Decisions on risk assessments remain the joint responsibility of churchwardens, PCCs and incumbents.

We hope that this information will help us all to move forward successfully and it will be updated when further guidance is received.

With thoughts and prayers

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