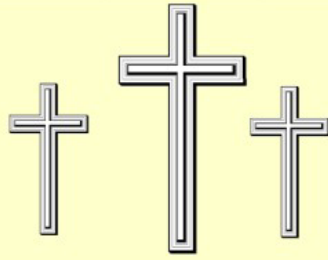


*St Giles
Rowley Regis
Parish Church*



Dear Friends in Christ,

I am delighted to be able to write to you to invite you back to worship in church from Sunday 19th July at 10:15am. As it will feel too soon to return to church for some, the online services will continue to be available to watch from 10am on Sunday and Wednesday, on Facebook and Youtube.

Should you choose to come to church you will find that due to the current pandemic, there will be some restrictions and rules to maintain the highest possible level of safety, and these are contained in this letter. I have also included some questions and answers to help you decide if you should come back to church now... or wait a little longer.

We have done a thorough risk assessment on the church, and we are able safely to accommodate up to 30 people individually whilst maintaining a 2m (6 foot) distance for everyone. This is by using the pews in the main body of the church, and only using alternate pews. (If you are a family group living together in the same house or sharing the same support bubble, it is possible for you all to sit on one pew together, even if there are more than two of you).

At this stage we do not know how many of you are able to come back to church, or indeed want to come back yet. If we find that we have more people than spaces, we will consider putting on an extra service, perhaps in the morning, perhaps on a Sunday evening, to accommodate everyone.

At this stage we cannot be sure how many people would like to come back, so for the first few weeks we will be gauging the demand and numbers. We will also re-start the midweek service on Wednesdays at 10:15am. This will take place in the main church (not the Side Chapel). If you are concerned about being in a large group of people, you might want to consider coming along on Wednesday to receive Communion.

Here are some useful questions and answers:

Is it safe to come back to church?

We have made it as safe as possible by putting in all the recommended measures from the government and the national Church of England. Ultimately however, your safety and the safety of others relies on us all following the advice and guidelines, including hand washing/sanitising and maintaining 2m distance wherever possible. The principle is that we are all responsible for our own safety, **and for that of others**. All the precautions we are taking arise from our love for one another.

What if I am shielding or in a vulnerable group?	If you have a letter from the government telling you to shield until at least August, you should not come back to church yet. If you are in a vulnerable group (underlying health conditions, over 70 or any other category) then you should read this letter carefully, and make your own decision as to whether or not you feel comfortable returning to church.
What if I feel unwell?	If you feel unwell in any way (not just Covid-19 symptoms), then please do not come to church until you are better. If you think you might have the Coronavirus, then please follow the guidance on self-isolation/household isolation.
Do I have to book a pew every week?	We are not booking seats as some churches are, but will judge demand and hold extra services if demand exceeds capacity.
What happens when we arrive at church?	The doors will be propped open. Please walk in, use the hand sanitizer and go straight to a pew and sit down . Do not walk around or move to chat to others – maintain the right distance all the time.
Where should I sit?	Please observe the signs and sit in the available pews. Please leave a 2m gap if you are sharing a pew, unless you are in a household group. Do not sit right by the aisle, so that there is a 2m gap across the aisle.
I have lots of offertory envelopes. Should I bring them?	Yes, please! Many of you have been putting your weekly offerings in envelopes whilst the church building was closed. Please do bring them with you when you first return to church. Thank you!
Is there hand sanitiser available?	Yes. There will be sanitiser at the back of church as you enter. However, it is a good idea to carry your own with you as well, to use during the service as needed.
Has the church been cleaned?	Yes. After each service/church use, all surfaces, including door handles, are wiped down with anti-bacterial sanitising wipes or spray. The lectern will be wiped down in between readers too.
What about the offertory?	Please place your offering on the plate at the back of church when you enter (or if you forget, on your way out). There will be no offertory procession.
Will we be singing hymns?	No. At the moment, singing is prohibited. However, we may play hymns at the usual times in the service so that you can sing along “in your head”! We will say any responses during the service.
Will there be individual service sheets?	We will use the normal service booklets, but we ask that you take a copy home and bring it each week.
Will we share the peace	No. We will say the words of the peace, but we won't leave our places or shake hands (or any physical contact). Waving and smiling will be a good way to share!

<p>What will happen at communion</p>	<p>The priest will sanitise hands at the offertory, prior to starting the Eucharistic Prayer, and again before distributing the wafers. We will use individual wafers, rather than breaking up one large wafer, to maintain as much hygiene as possible. Communion will be received in silence.</p> <p>You will receive communion at the bottom of the steps, approaching one pew at a time, maintaining a 2m distance. Please receive the bread in your open hand held out in front of you. And then return to your pew via the side aisles.</p> <p>We are only receiving the bread, not the wine.</p>
<p>Will the toilets be in use?</p>	<p>Yes. If you need to use them, please ensure in addition to washing your hands after using the toilet, you use sanitiser on the way back into church.</p>
<p>What happens at the end of the service?</p>	<p>After the priest has processed out, please leave church in an orderly fashion, one pew at a time, maintaining a 2m gap. The people in the back rows need to leave first, and go straight out of the church. Please do not stop to chat to people so that we can maintain a safe distance and flow of people. The priest will wait outside to greet everyone, but of course will not be shaking hands. Again, maintain a 2m distance as you pass by.</p>
<p>Will there be tea and coffee?</p>	<p>No. It is fine to chat to people at a safe distance once you have left the church building, but please be aware of others who might need to walk past you.</p>
<p>How long are these arrangements going to last?</p>	<p>Things are bound to change again, as they have throughout the pandemic. Therefore these arrangements will remain in place until there are further changes nationally. If there is a "local lockdown", then the church will have to be closed again for a designated period of time. If we are able to start singing, we will do so as soon as possible.</p>
<p>Will there still be online services on Sunday and Wednesday?</p>	<p>Yes, the services will continue to be available online on Sunday and Wednesday from 10am on Facebook and YouTube.</p>
<p>What about face covering?</p>	<p>Please also note that from Sunday 26th July government and Church of England advice is that anyone attending a place of worship is strongly advised to wear face covering.</p>

If you have any questions or queries, do be in touch! 07868 308351 johnjbridge@sky.com

With my continuing prayers for you all. Every blessing.

Revd. John Bridge