

How the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions will affect the way we worship in Canalside

Like most organisations the Church has been considering how to respond to the Government's lifting of Covid-19 restrictions on Monday. The Church of England has taken the view that decisions about how we should worship from now on should mainly be made at a local level by the incumbent and his/her team. John met with the Ministry Team, PCC Standing Committees and Wardens on Tuesday to consider the best way forward but keeping in mind the current increase in Covid cases across the country. Overall it was decided to proceed with caution with small changes for the time being. These decisions will be frequently reviewed with the hope that in the not too distant future we should be able to return to something like normal.

Daily re-opening of Church

St Michael's Church in Hilperton and St George's Church in Semington will re-open for visitors during daylight hours on weekdays (MTWTF).

St Michael's with effect from Monday 26th July.
St George's with effect from Monday 2nd August

Private Prayer at St Michael's

The Private Prayer sessions started at St Michael's during the lockdowns etc will continue on Thursdays from 10-11.30am. The aim is that where possible someone will be in the church during this time to welcome visitors. Our thanks to Sandra who has taken a lead on this through the pandemic and has agreed to continue that work.

Booking to attend Services

The booking process to attend services will end with immediate effect. However, a record will be kept of those attending services by Wardens, members of the Welcome Team etc in case the need arises for us to contact those in church on a particular date. One off visitors / new members of the congregation will be asked to provide their contact details. Michael will keep the attendance records until the pandemic has ended at which time they will be destroyed.

This process will be regularly reviewed and at some point it may be necessary to re-introduce a booking process particularly for services where a high attendance is expected (Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas etc)

Entry to Church

At St Michael's entry and exit to the church will be via the main door from now on.

The NHS QR code system will remain in place in all our churches for scanning on arrival for those with smart phones.

Hand Sanitiser

Hand sanitiser and paper towels will continue to be provided for entry/exit to church and we encourage everyone to continue sanitising their hands until further notice.

Seating

Although it is no longer necessary for us to direct people where to sit in church our advice would be to continue to sit at a sensible distance from those from other households. This is for your safety and for others. The signage on pews at St Michael's will remain for the time being suggesting that people sit in every other pew and either at the wall end or the aisle end. Again, this is an area we will keep under review in the coming weeks.

Wearing of face masks

Again our advice to you is to wear a face mask throughout the time you are in church but if you prefer you can remove it once you are seated. However, we request at the minimum that you wear a face mask when moving around inside the building etc as a courtesy to those who are feeling more vulnerable.

Singing

It is wonderful that we can now sing together again in church but because of the current situation, regarding the virus, we think it is best for us to sing quietly with our face masks on for the time being.

Communion

With regards to the giving of Communion it has been decided to keep things as they are at the moment with one exception – when the Priest gives the wafer to you he/she is now permitted to say “The Body of Christ” and in reply we can now say “Amen”.

The Peace

The sharing of the Peace will continue as now with no physical contact – we can wave, use a symbol formed by our hands etc.

Refreshments

Sadly we feel it would be best not to re-introduce the serving of refreshments in church for the time being.

Thank you all for your continued support and patience during the last 16 months. These have been difficult times for everyone and although we have not yet emerged from the pandemic it would be so sad to have reached this point, to then rush into removing all restrictions, only to find we have problems in the weeks ahead. Let's proceed together with caution and small steps.

With many thanks for your support in this.

John Rees

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