

Recent Statement from Diocese October 4th, 2021, re Covid Guidance.

Dear Reverend Fathers

Government CV-19 guidance in relation to places of worship has not changed since 16th June 21 and can be found at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july#history>

Similarly the guidance from CBCEW has not been updated.

Our most recent guidance was based on Government and CBCEW advice together with the following principles:-

- providing safe places to worship and congregate,
- building confidence across our communities
- being respectful of those who are more vulnerable within our communities
- maintaining awareness of the prevailing infection and hospitalisation rates across our communities and reacting appropriately should they change

Our guidance recommended the following sensible mitigations:-

- Holy Water stoups must not be filled.
- Track and Trace- to be maintained as long as it is in operation
- Booking systems to continue wherever there is a concern that risk assessed capacity levels may be exceeded
- Hand sanitiser at entrances and exits
- Face coverings to be the norm for those in church
- General cleaning to a good standard, using commonly available cleaning fluids and detergents.
- Social distancing to be encouraged
- Providing cards "Please leave a space' for individuals to use either side of them should they wish
- Designating area of the church where there will be greater social distancing, if possible,
- Using face coverings where there is any congregational singing

Having reviewed these principles and mitigations we feel that they remain balanced and sensible, particularly given that we no longer have public liability insurance for any CV-19 related claims

It was interesting to note the BBC report yesterday <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-8719169> indicating that Kettering was currently the area

with the highest number of new positive tests per 100,000 people in the country, with Corby not far behind.

As we move into the Autumn, I have been asked on several occasions what is the position in relation to heating and ventilation. Unfortunately, I cannot provide any definitive advice in this respect. The general answer is as follows:-

- we need to follow our principles
- maintain adequate ventilation within our churches to minimise the opportunity for the virus to spread
- assessment our specific circumstances and perhaps engage the congregation on how best to proceed

Going forward as we learn to live with CV-19 the emphasis will be on having **appropriate risk assessments** in place which are consistent with our principles, and which give due consideration to the mitigations that are recommended above and perhaps most importantly are regularly reviewed. Such reviews should be documented. In the event that we may need to evidence/defend our thinking and practices, the objective robustness of our risk assessments will be key.

Should you require any specific support then please contact Natasha Bisset at Bishops House who can engage our external advisors Mentor if required.

Kind regards

Tony