

HOLY TRINITY AND SACRED HEART
COVID 19 ROUTE MAP STEP 4 - JULY 19 2021

1) INTRODUCTION

Following the successful on-going vaccination programme, the government has decided that the delayed relaxations of Covid restrictions can now be made. Consequently all rules and guidelines currently in place are now removed. The **Bishops' Conference** has agreed but with certain caveats.

The key watchwords for the future steps are discernment of local prevailing conditions and careful consideration of what mitigations are needed in the light of these – **chief of which is the maintaining of a safe environment for our people. Our people must feel safe.**

The trustees of our parishes (generally the Bishops) now assume responsibility for our people's safety and are charged with working on a risk-based approach.

There is still a very dangerous virus out there, especially its variants. **So the risks will continue to be measured locally and new procedures either put in place or existing ones allowed to remain.**

The Bishops have recommended the following and many had already been considered at a recent North Birmingham deanery meeting.

2) CONTINUING PROCEDURES

Until, therefore, we are certain that all of us are beyond risk it is recommended that five key measures to help reduce aerosol and droplet spread remain in place for now:

- ❖ Use of NHS Track and Trace login or our own register – this remains government policy.
- ❖ Hand sanitisers will continue to be used
- ❖ Masks will continue to be worn subject to the note below.*
- ❖ Maintaining of adequate ventilation

***NOTE RE MASK WEARING.**

Because mask wearing is not being made mandatory by the government, we cannot make it a requirement in our church. However we know that many parishioners will only feel safe if wearing a mask – so mask-wearing is our favoured option.

If, however, you do not wish to wear a mask, a separate part of the church will be made available for those so wishing. The size of this area will only be known once parishioners arrive; so a judgement as to where in church that area might be will be made by the stewards on the day.

- ❖ the church being given a “good” clean weekly; and only touch points being cleaned after each service. **However, if there is an increase in local covid cases, this policy will be reviewed.**

3) CAPACITY

With many pews currently unavailable we are working at about 50% capacity – ie. we have safe seating for about 120. With the latest relaxation we shall continue the pew restrictions until 9 August, giving us time to assess how we move forward once our parishioners have experienced the current arrangements.

Notwithstanding this, there are some other relaxations:

- ❖ **Funerals** – limited to the capacity of the church, ie about 120 as above
- ❖ **Baptisms** - limited to the capacity of the church, ie about 120 as above
- ❖ **Marriages** – limited to the capacity of the church, ie about 120 as above

4) STEWARDS

Although the bishops feel it is no longer necessary to have stewards, we feel they carry out a very useful and valuable service, especially as more and more people are returning to Church. They are a welcoming face at the door, and are necessary:

- ❖ To answer questions when asked
- ❖ handing out (or directing people to) newsletters and mass sheets
- ❖ to complete track and trace requirements
- ❖ to wipe down frequent touch points and a more general wipe down after the last mass of the day
- ❖ to provide advice and encouragement on covid-safe measures, but only if requested or clearly necessary - this includes wearing of face masks, etc

5) WHAT CAN WE DO NOW

- ❖ **It is no longer necessary to have your movements restricted; but please exercise caution and do not get too close to one another.**
- ❖ **All the usual ministers can now be deployed at Mass, such as servers, readers, extraordinary ministers of communion, etc.**
- ❖ **The offertory collection can now be taken in the normal way.**
- ❖ **Holy Communion under one kind.****
- ❖ **Sing as a congregation, but only behind our masks – this will be phased in gently over the coming months and sheets with lyrics will be made available – not hymn books**
- ❖ **Offertory Procession**
- ❖ **Light votive candles**
- ❖ **Visit the church during the day for private prayer – but please check-in**

6) WHAT WE CANNOT DO YET

- ❖ **Holy Water stoops will not be filled**
- ❖ **The Sign of Peace**
- ❖

**** HOLY COMMUNION**

As you know we have now reverted to receiving Holy Communion at the appointed liturgical time rather than at the end of Mass. **But please note:**

- The tables will still be used – because they carry the hand sanitiser for the celebrants.
- Orderly lines must be formed, as now, up the centre aisle
- Return to your places using the side aisles (if your bench is 'blocked', please use the one behind).
- Worshippers in the side aisles will follow the centre aisles, from the back
- **Although communion in the hand is the preferred norm, communion on the tongue is now allowed; but those so wishing must come to the priest at the end of the 'normal' communion as the celebrant must sanitise his hands between each communicant.**