

Christ Church in-person worship after 19th July 2021

Dear All,

We write to let you know our thoughts about in-person worship after 19th July when the Government ends almost all legal restrictions on Places of Worship. We spent time at the Deacons' Meeting last week and at an extra meeting last night carefully considering how we should proceed after the law changes on Monday. Thankfully, we had updated advice from the URC Synod Moderators and the Baptist Union to help us in our deliberations (links to their guidance are below).

In general terms, we wish to proceed with caution, which as we have heard this week, is very much in keeping with the Government's own advice to all, and this seems especially important as infection rates continue to rise locally and beyond. Both URC and BU advice recommends that as part of our love for one another and our neighbour, we should express this care by doing all we can to limit the spread of the virus and continuing with some of the measures we have become familiar with. So, what we continue to do is an expression of our love and care for others and will hopefully help everyone, and especially those who are vulnerable, to stay safe and feel safe. Additionally, the Deacons continue to have a legal responsibility to update risk assessments and maintain a safe workspace for Minister, staff and volunteers.

As Minister and Deacons, may we strongly encourage everyone to adhere to the following recommendations please:

Face coverings

Please continue to use face coverings when inside the Church buildings. They remain recommended by the Government in enclosed spaces and rather than protecting the wearer, they help to protect others from any infection the wearer may unwittingly transmit. As now, any of us, or any visitor, who is medically exempt, along with younger children, are not required to wear a face covering.

Congregational singing

From Sunday 25th July, we are delighted to say that we may all sing again, albeit with masks on and at a moderate volume level. We have all missed this and it will great to be able to sing again. Singing with face coverings will help minimise the additional risk of aerosol transmission. We will also increase the choir numbers up to a possible eight, subject to the availability of choir singers and as now, to aid us in our congregational worship, they will be able to remove their masks when singing. The choir will remain socially distanced in the gallery for now.

Hand sanitising, Test and Trace and social distancing

We encourage everyone to continue the practice of hand sanitising on arrival and before departure from the sanctuary, of allowing us to keep a record of attendance for Test and Trace purposes and of making space for one another and maintaining some social distance, especially when inside the church buildings and of refraining from physical contact at this stage.

Seating arrangements

We will change the space between rows of worshippers from a two row gap to one row. Generally, folk will be able to sit nearer each other although we still recommend allowing a space in pews between different households. Stewards will continue to offer guidance but in a less prescriptive way when the law changes on Monday. Signs will be placed in pews which are not available to help us all know where we might sit.

Socialising inside

May we ask that during the coming weeks, we carry on socialising in the gardens and minimise our socialising inside, just to help keep any infection risks as low as possible. That said, if the weather is inclement, we will be able to socialise inside after the service while mask wearing and keeping some social distancing in place.

Refreshments

We all look forward to sharing time together with a cup of tea and coffee again, however, we do not wish to recommence refreshments yet. As with all our recommendations, we will review this again at the next Deacons' Meeting on 9th September.

Junior Church

The Junior Church teachers will be leading summer activities with Biblical themes throughout the holiday period for children under 11 years old. These summer sessions will continue to operate in keeping with the current covid safe guidelines. This will be reviewed by the Junior Church teachers at their next team meeting early in September. Sunday 5th September will be an all-age service with communion.

Many thanks for taking the time to read our recommendations. Hopefully, they will help us all to cautiously walk forward together and to care for one another, and any guests, while attending our worship services from Sunday 25th July. If anything is unclear or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with one of us.

Every blessing to you all,

*Neil and Rob
and all the Christ Church Deacons*

[New Freedoms, Same Responsibilities: Synod Moderators' advice to congregations \(urc.org.uk\)](https://www.urc.org.uk)

[The Baptist Union of Great Britain : Essential Guidance](https://www.baptistunion.org.uk)