

Making St Aidan's COVID Safe



INTRODUCTION

All countries have different rules and all places of worship have different opportunities and challenges. This is how we at St Aidan's are bringing together, practically speaking, the sciences of virology and epidemiology, the traditions of Church and UK Government regulations. How you do that where you are will vary and that's fine - but remember, please, the science of the virus is the exactly same wherever you are and whatever your circumstances. You may, therefore, find some of our practical responses here useful.

AEROSOLS AND DROPLETS: SINGING, TALKING, BREATHING AND TOUCHING

This is where we must start. This virus is spread by either droplets expelled by coughing and sneezing or the fine mist suspended in the air when we breathe, talk or sing ... especially exhaling deeply, talking strongly or singing loudly. This fine mist is what is referred to as an aerosol. The virus particles are so small they can easily hitch a ride on this fine mist, and if this happens in an enclosed, poorly ventilated space for even a short period of time, anyone not wearing an adequate face covering will get infected. We still don't know just how many virus particles breathed in from an aerosol will overwhelm any given immune system in a

susceptible person, but clearly general protection for all is the order of the day. Droplets from coughing and sneezing probably travel about 2 or 3 metres before falling to the ground. Aerosols can disperse widely in convection currents but directly and forwards, approximately 8 meters. Toilets flushed with the pan up or automatic urinals are excellent means of aerosol dispersion, bearing in mind we know that faeces contain especially high concentrations of the virus. Of course, if the virus is not breathed in or gathered together in sufficient quantity on the surface of the eye, it can still find its way into your body if you touch a surface contaminated with formerly airborne aerosols or droplets or minute liquid films present on contaminated skin which has touched this surface beforehand. Recent studies have shown that even when the surface appears to have dried, an exceedingly thin film of viable virus contaminants can persist for days unless the surface is sanitised with soap, at least 60% alcohol or bleach.

Knowing this, what measures are we putting in place at St Aidan's to ready ourselves for re-opening when all key personnel have been vaccinated? Remember that these restrictions will need to remain in place well beyond the point that herd immunity has kicked in (60%+ of the population by vaccination or survived exposure). As things stand right now I would estimate that to be by Western Easter for vaccination roll out and next Summer for life more or less back to normal (current Government estimates).

PRACTICAL MEASURES

.... to prevent or control aerosols and surface transmission (This conforms to Government / SAGE advice and regulation).

1. Microphones are to be used by the clergy and choir. No raised voices shall be used in singing and chanting.
2. ONE person only will sing in the choir, unmasked of course while singing, but always behind a perspex screen (see the photos). More than one singer would be outside the screen barrier. Standing closer would breach the 2 metre social distancing rule, if a radio microphone was not available.
3. Only the Clergy, Choir and Apostle Reader should read or sing in the church. The people can whisper the responses to themselves but not sing them out loud. The Apostle Reader should use a microphone effectively so as to speak very quietly and be heard. This also applies to the clergy. The celebrating priest should keep the Gifts covered until the consecratory prayers and then re-cover them. He must not project his voice over them.
4. Icons, relics or books may be venerated with a non-touching bow but they must not be kissed or indeed touched with the hand. NO one must kiss the base of the chalice or the priest's hand at other times.

5. Books. The Apostle Reading will be provided on a safely disposable sheet. No books must be handled, so no shared service books or pamphlets. Books may be borrowed from the library with the assistance of Fr Gregory or his deputy but, upon return, they must be given to Fr Gregory for sanitising before being put back into the library. Likewise, books may be bought from the bookstall but only handled for inspection with the gloves provided.

6. Food and Drink. No food or drink may be shared or brought into church except to be consumed by the person or household that brought it. Sealed cartons of juice, bottles of water and small biscuit packets will be provided for those who have not brought their own sustenance to break the fast. All such food and drink will be consumed off the premises. Holy Water will be given to you by Fr Gregory on request. Please do not help yourself. Kolyva brought for Memorials must be taken home and consumed only by those who have brought it.

7. Toilets will be locked except for genuine emergencies (children must be warned beforehand!) Each time the toilet is used it will have to be thoroughly cleaned by someone in PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) which means that you will be spoiling the service for them, so please, emergencies only!

8. Masks will be worn at all times inside church to prevent aerosol transmission and only removed briefly when receiving Holy Communion. Antidoron will be placed in the hand by the priest (gloved) immediately after Holy Communion and not in a second queue at the end.

9. Social distancing. 2 metre separation between households or individuals and other households or individuals will be maintained at all times, including the queue for Holy Communion. The floor will be marked with arrows for traffic flow and chairs marked to maintain the two metre rule. Unnecessary moving around during the service is strongly discouraged, but if it has to happen, move slowly and maintain social distancing. We don't want a rippling domino effect! Confession will happen in the usual manner, but will be of briefer duration and both the priest and the penitent must wear masks or face coverings throughout. If it proves impractical in this way for confidentiality to be maintained and in order to facilitate 2 metre social distancing, confession could take place in an adjoining room with no one else present. This alternative provision will be subject to Safeguarding constraints in respect of the confession of children and vulnerable adults.

10. Entrance and Exit including Pre-booking. There will be one way into the building (front entrance) and one way out (back emergency exit through the new gate onto Clare Road). Please follow the arrows and signs. Upon entry, Helen will receive your pre-booked admission form (which we will either email or post to you when you apply to attend), check the entry, take your temperature with a NHS approved "gun" and give you a Guide to Worshipping Safely" leaflet. We are rationing attendance from week to week as social distancing requirements limit capacity. You will only be offered a return visit if no one else wants to come who has not attended before you. Track and Trace require us to keep these records. Additionally, there is a Q-code box pattern you can scan into your mobile app affixed to the front door. If you have not booked in beforehand, if you have the classic

symptoms of COVID-19 or if your body temperature is 38 degrees Centigrade or above, you will not be admitted and Helen will request that you return home. In that case, your name will be carried forward to the top of the list for the next available week providing you are well or have tested negative. People not aware of these requirements and who are new to our church (only) may be admitted on a first come, first served basis on the day and allocated one of a few spare places which have been reserved for this eventuality.

11. In the altar only one priest will celebrate, the other standing aside at least 2 metres. There will be one server standing on each side.

12. At the administration of Holy Communion (with Antidoron), there will be one line and one spoon will be used. This spoon will be sanitised after each person or household has received.

13. Baptisms and weddings may take place but there will be adjustments made in each to keep everyone safe. Until the pandemic clears, wedding couples will bring their own crowns to church.

14. Children must be kept under control by their parents at all times and not be allowed to wander with as freely as before. The children's corner with toys will be put out of use for the duration of the pandemic.

15. These rules will be monitored and explained by specially designated persons to help us all care for each other and keep safe. Your cooperation is appreciated. The church will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised after each use.

Archpriest Gregory Hallam

Feast of St Nicholas

6th December 2020