

COVID Mitigations at Our Lady of England

Update: June 2022

Thank you once again for your many thoughtful responses to the consultation. There was a great spread of views, and some good ideas too. It's not possible to please everyone. After further prayer, discussions and observations, the discernment is that it is now time to make a substantial move forward. Of particular note was the onset of Summer when we can maximise ventilation with open doors and windows. Now is the best time to do this. We will, of course, keep this under review, and should things become difficult next winter or at any time we may need to reverse some changes.

Rule 1 remains absolutely unchanged. If you feel unwell, have got 'a bit of a cold' and so on, **please stay at home**. This is essential, and is an obligation of charity and justice towards the vulnerable. I was alarmed to discern an emerging idea that sounds like: "I don't want to wear a mask, but of course I would do if I'd got a cough." That is not what is meant by making face coverings a matter of personal conscientious choice. **Stay home**.

Particular points to note

- Welcome ministry to continue/resume as appropriate, with a view to relocating back into the porch
- Hand Sanitiser strongly encouraged on entering and leaving the church
- Side door 'exit only' discontinued
- Church doors and windows open for ventilation whenever possible
- Wearing of face coverings a matter of personal conscientious choice
- 10am Music Leaders (formally they are not a choir) to remain positioned behind the altar for the time being, but a return to the nave later in the year is being considered. We are aware that new people would like to join but won't do so 'up there with everybody looking'.
- Occasional roping off of a bench here and there for particular distancing needs.
- Arrangements for offertory collection (basket at the back) and second collections (wooden post-box at the back) remain unchanged
- Arrangements for the offertory procession remain unchanged
- Non-contact sign of peace continues unchanged. Note that the manner by which the sign of peace is exchanged is down to local custom, and for as long as the general etiquette in society is that you can't assume a stranger will accept a handshake then it's not yet appropriate to reintroduce it in the Mass.

Distribution of Holy Communion

I will continue the communal Acclamation of Eucharistic Faith “The Body of Christ – Amen” and “The Blood of Christ – Amen”. This is a particular quirk of mine, most other churches have discarded it. I am keeping it a) because I know it’s a moment of spiritual communion for online listeners, and b) because I feel I should at least *symbolically* offer you the chalice, and c) I wish to keep alive the hope of *actually* offering you the chalice.

In addition, the priest or minister will resume saying “The Body of Christ” quietly to each individual communicant, to which they respond quietly “Amen”. The priest or minister will continue to wear a face covering for the distribution of Holy Communion.

A reminder to ministers that you must sanitise your hands **after** you have received Holy Communion and replaced your face covering. Make sure your face covering is settled back in place before you sanitise. If you need to adjust it again, or if anything else happens that compromises your hands, then pause giving communion, return to the altar and re-sanitise before continuing. It is essential that this is done and seen to be done.

Cleaning of the Church

The fogging of the benches between the weekend Masses is discontinued, but the machine and kit will be available in the sacristy should a particular need arise. Weekly cleaning of the church to continue in a more normal way. It would be good at this point to explore the options for new volunteers for a cleaning team.

Thanks

This is also the moment to record your thanks and mine to a few very dedicated people who have cleaned, sanitised and welcomed at Mass, week in, week out. It’s worth remembering that I had to sign-off various risk assessments that these people and things were in place before we could restart Mass after lock-down. It would not have happened without their ministry and dedication.

Mass for the Vulnerable

Those seeking a quieter Mass with a minimal level of singing are directed towards Sunday 8am Mass.

Those who, with an informed conscience, discern that such arrangements present for them too great a risk, are therefore not bound by the Sunday obligation. Weekday Mass, especially on Saturday morning (followed by Exposition), may offer a suitable lower-risk alternative.

The podcast (audio recording) of Saturday evening Mass will continue whenever possible.

With thanks for being such a great congregation, Fr Charles