

## **Procedures for Mass at St. Vincent's after 25 July**

There will be changes after this week. We are following the 'Step 4 Guidance' issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales regarding the safe uses of churches as from the end of July (<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/covid-guidance-collective-worship/>).

Key points:

- you will no longer have to apply for a place at Sunday mass;
- we will still be registering names and contact details of those attending mass; for Sunday masses this can be done via e-mail (otherwise you will give details as you enter church);
- you should still wear a mask in church (unless exempt);
- strict social distancing no longer applies, all benches will be in use, and the one-way system will cease;
- ... however, we ask everyone to be mindful of others, and respect their needs and space;
- we will process up for communion;
- hand sanitiser will still be available, and we continue to open doors/windows for ventilation;
- there will be two stewards at Sunday mass, to welcome, take details, and generally assist.
- Please also read the more detailed information below, which will help you decide whether you should now attend mass, and what to expect when attending.

### **More detail...**

Whilst most restrictions were lifted nationally on 19 July, we need to continue to create a safe environment in places of worship, particularly in the first few months. We need to recognise that we are all at different stages of readiness to 'return to normal', with many still wary.

The Bishops' Guidance says that: "**face coverings are strongly recommended to be worn by those in church**" - at St. Vincent's we will follow that recommendation.

In addition, **good ventilation** continues to be an important factor, so we will continue to open doors and windows in church while people are present. The hand sanitiser dispensers will remain, and we will continue to clean frequent touch-points after mass.

There will no longer be restrictions on the numbers attending mass, and you no longer have to apply for a place. However, we will **maintain a register of those attending mass**. For **Sunday mass you can pre-register** via the booking system:

[stvincencrookesbooking@gmail.com](mailto:stvincencrookesbooking@gmail.com); otherwise you will need to give your name and contact details to a steward when you arrive at church. For e-mail pre-registration, simply indicate in the title of the message your name, and date and time of mass.

For **weekday masses** there will be a register in the narthex and, if there is no steward, we ask those attending to write their name and contact (phone or e-mail) on this list.

There will continue to be a couple of **stewards** at Sunday mass, to provide assistance and support. They will: open windows and doors before mass; note details of those not pre-registered; take the collection in the narthex after mass; clean as required; close windows/doors once everyone has left.

The **one-way system** will stop, so you can now enter and exit via either door in the narthex.

**All benches will be in use**; the ribbon will be removed. There will no longer be set seats, and no more escorting into and out of church.

We will process up for **communion**, but please be aware of others and avoid getting too close. Communion will be given out under one kind only (the host) and in the hand only. Those giving out

communion (generally the priest plus one minister at Sunday mass) will continue to wear a mask; and the communal “The Body of Christ; Amen” before you come up for Communion will continue.

The **sign of peace** will still be suspended.

The **toilets** will be open once again.

The **collection** will be taken on the way out, by stewards in the narthex holding the baskets. (If you have not done so already, you might consider switching to making your offering via bank transfer).

Several things will not be restored straight away, eg. holy water in the font, singing at mass, hymn books and mass sheets on the benches, altar servers, offertory procession, votive candles. These and other issues will be reviewed later in the Autumn, for gradual re-introduction as and when.

**Overall, we ask everyone to behave responsibly, be sensitive to others needs and concerns, and avoid getting too close to others. This applies generally, but specifically at communion and when arriving at and leaving church. Remember, even if you are happy being in close proximity to others from outside your household, others may not be.**

Note that the Bishops’ Conference indicate that the exemption from the **obligation to attend Sunday mass** continues to apply for those who are unable to attend mass. They say: *“It is our continuing judgement, therefore, that it is not possible at the present time for all of the faithful to attend Mass on a Sunday thus fulfilling their duty to God.”* And that: *“It is hoped that it will be possible for all Catholics in England and Wales to fulfil this most important Church precept, that of the Sunday Obligation, by the First Sunday in Advent 2021.”*

Online masses will still be available.

**If you are still cautious about attending Sunday mass**, you might consider attending a weekday mass in the first instance as they are

much less busy. Also, of the two Sunday masses, the evening mass (18:00) is notably less busy.

All this is, of course, pending any local variations in public health guidance, or subsequent changes to the national guidelines.