

What to expect when you come to St Nicolas for worship on Sunday

'I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord' (Psalm 122)

and we are glad to be back worshipping God together in our church building once again. We are following guidance from the Government and the Church of England and some things will need to be done differently to keep everyone safe. Remember that other people may be more vulnerable than you. For their sake please follow this new way of doing things.

Please read the information below so that you are well prepared before you come.

1. If you are feeling unwell, if you have a cough or a cold, if you have or have had any symptoms of Covid-19 over the last 7 days **DO NOT COME TO CHURCH**. Anyone showing symptoms will be asked to go home.
2. If you can, you should wear a face mask when you come to church and keep it on throughout the service.
3. The church will be shut until 15 minutes before the service. Please queue in the churchyard 2 metres apart.
4. As you go in:
 - In line with the guidance, your name will be checked against a list of those who have reserved seats. The list of names will be kept for 21 days to assist the NHS Test and Trace system if need be.
 - If you need communion brought to you, or have other specific needs, please let a sidesman know.
 - A sidesman wearing gloves and a mask will squirt hand sanitiser into your hands. This will avoid the need for everyone to touch the bottle and should be quicker
 - Please collect a service booklet. These will have been quarantined to ensure they are hygienic
5. Half the pews have been roped off, and the longer pews divided in two to ensure a two metre distance between worshippers.
6. We will all be longing to chat to those we have not seen for a while – but please go straight to your seat, and save chatting for outside after the service. Lots of people moving around the church will make it hard to maintain our distance from each other.
7. Please:
 - Fill pews from the front to minimise the number of people who have to pass one another.
 - Only sit with those you live with. To comply with the guidance we need to have a 'One household to a pew' rule.
 - Sit at least a metre from the aisle, not at the end of the pew, so that others don't have to pass close to you, particularly during communion.

8. Children are very welcome but they must sit in the pews/chairs with their parents or stay in their buggy. They will not be able to run around or interact with other children or adults. All toys have had to be removed so please bring something from home to occupy them. We hope the service will be under an hour in length.
9. You will notice that all the cushions and kneelers have been removed. This is following the guidelines as they are very hard to clean. They are being safely stored in the Church Room. Similarly all leaflets and literature and Bibles have had to be removed.
10. If you need the toilets please go round the outside of the church and access them from the churchyard, not through the choir vestry. Wipes and hand sanitiser will be provided in the toilets. Please wipe down any surfaces you have touched before you leave, e.g. taps, handles and wash your hands thoroughly and use the hand gel. Please queue outside in the churchyard if need be.
11. The service will proceed largely as normal except we are sadly not allowed to sing. However we can enjoy Peter playing the organ before and after the service and during communion. We may use some of the pre-recorded readings and prayers from the online service to help us feel we are one congregation worshipping together but in different places. We can share the peace by smiling and waving – not by shaking hands.
12. During communion we will be operating a strict one way system, going up the centre aisle and then out around the side aisles to our places. We will be distributing from the chancel step and using the wafers only. The person distributing communion will be wearing gloves and a mask. To try to keep a safe distance apart please stand on the marks on the floor while waiting and when receiving communion, which we will do at arm's length. We will not be able to assist people to get to the front of the church so if you need to receive in your seat please let the wardens know when you arrive.
13. There won't be a collection during the service but you will be able to place your offering in a plate as you leave.
14. We are not allowed to serve refreshments and it is safest to chat in the fresh air in the churchyard. In addition, all the pews and other surfaces will need to be cleaned by the wardens and sidesmen before they can go home so we ask that you leave the church fairly quickly after the service by either the tower or the south door.

It may feel strange at first but this is a step on the way to worshipping all together again. We will be constantly reviewing how we do things and fully expect the Government guidance to change frequently. We hope that none the less you will feel you have met with God in worship, and that you will feel safe and cared for.