

Thursday 22 July 2021

Dear St Nic's Church Family

**“God has put the body together in such a way ... so that the parts have the same care for each other that they do for themselves. (1 Corinthians 12:25)**

In the light of the lifting of Covid restrictions on Monday and the guidance issued by the government and the Church of England, I want to update you on what this means for services at St Nic's from this Sunday.

The implications of the lifting of restrictions are exciting. Most significantly we can sing again in church! What a joy it will be. And we no longer have to abide by blanket legal restrictions but have the freedom to choose what is right in our own context. Of course, with that freedom comes responsibility. We have spent much time as clergy, staff and churchwardens discussing what is the most responsible approach for our services at St Nic's in these initial weeks following July 19<sup>th</sup>.

Our initial guidelines for services are as follows:

- We will sing!
- We will ask you to wear a mask as you arrive and throughout the service. However, we will invite you to remove your mask for the reading and sermon.
- We will keep alternate pews roped off and continue with our existing stewarding arrangements at the west door. However, you will be able to choose where to sit in church. You will be able to make your own way in and out rather than being shown to your seat.
- We will no longer have our registration system at the door. We encourage you to use the Track and Trace QR codes in the pews.

We are well aware that, for some, there will be huge disappointment that we are asking you to continue wearing masks. This may seem like a frustratingly cautious approach to our corporate worship. We share that disappointment. We long for the day when masks are removed.

In our discussions, the word we have been focusing on is not 'caution' (who wants to worship cautiously?!), but care. We have a clear responsibility to care for those who are more vulnerable, or who feel more anxious, in the face of rising Covid numbers once again. We need St Nic's to be a safe place for everyone to worship. We are called to have the same care for each other as we do for ourselves – 1 Corinthians 12:25.

We know that some will feel excluded by this decision and will stay away because they find masks too restrictive and uncomfortable during worship. These are not easy decisions... However, they are made slightly easier by the quality of our livestream service, which we'll continue to make available for the foreseeable future. You'll also be aware that some people are exempt from wearing masks, for a variety of different reasons. If that's the case for you, then please feel free to continue to attend onsite.

Please note that [these are initial guidelines](#), covering the early weeks over the summer. We will review them weekly in the light of experience and will loosen them as soon as we feel able. We will do a more significant review before the autumn. We would really value your feedback, so please do email, or speak to us.

As I was writing this email, I came across an intriguing translation of one of Jesus sayings: **'Your care for others is the measure of your greatness'** (Luke 9:48, Living Bible). May we be great at St Nic's, because of the way we care for others in this time of uncertainly, anxiety and transition.

With much love in Christ,

Will

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