

# THE BENEFICE OF LONG BUCKBY, WATFORD, WEST HADDON AND WINWICK

## COVID ACTION PLAN Version: 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### SUMMARY:

#### If you are coming to worship in one of our church buildings:

- **Face coverings:** please wear a face covering when entering and leaving the building. It can be removed while you are seated.
- **Social distancing** will continue – e.g. using alternate pews etc. Booking will continue for Sunday 10.30am services at St Lawrence Long Buckby.
- **Test and Trace:** we will continue to operate a system of noting attendance as requested by the NHS
- **Hand hygiene measures** continue as before.
- **Singing:** is now possible in most services. The exception is Holy Communion at St Lawrence (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday). This will enable those who aren't comfortable about singing to come. In the other churches you can ask to sit away from those who are singing).
- **Holy Communion:** will be available "in both kinds" (bread and wine) according to the following practices:
  - † **"Simultaneous administration"** (St Lawrence Long Buckby, All Saints West Haddon)
  - † **"Spotting wafers with wine"** (St Peter & St Paul Watford, St Michael & All Angels Winwick).

### INTRODUCTION

1. This Risk Assessment has been produced following consultation with churchwardens, PCC members and church members across our four churches. Where there are minor variations between churches these are made explicit in the text. A copy will be published on the Benefice Website ([www.stlawrences.org.uk](http://www.stlawrences.org.uk))
2. The final decision on steps to be taken rests with the Vicar.
3. We are proceeding on the basis of the Biblical principle that the Church is "the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12 vv12-31), and that we voluntarily accept a restriction of our own freedom for the good of others (1 Corinthians 10 vv 23-33).
4. Churchwardens have a particular responsibility to ensure everyone's safety and comfort during public worship. Please alert them to any particular needs or concerns.
5. This plan will be reviewed at least monthly.

#### SCOPE: the activities we are planning for:

- Private prayer
- Public worship
- Funerals, weddings, and baptisms
- Livestreaming and recording services
- Singing during public worship

#### A SEPARATE PLAN WILL BE COMPLETED FOR THE FOLLOWING USES:

- School visits e.g. community worship at All Saints West Haddon
- Concerts, Art Exhibitions, plays etc
- Opening for visitors/tourists/educational visits as a heritage attraction
- Essential voluntary and public services

Those who hire a church building for other uses (or the Schoolrooms at Long Buckby) will need to complete their own written risk assessment and provide a copy to the churchwardens (in addition to other requirements of the local hiring policy, which must make explicit reference to Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults).

## **CHURCH SERVICES:**

- 1. FACE COVERINGS:** People will be asked to wear a face covering when entering and leaving the building. If people decline there will be no enforcement. Face coverings do not need to be worn once people are seated
- 2. SOCIAL DISTANCING:** people will be asked to maintain social distancing within the building.
  - a. **Seating** will be arranged to facilitate this, with approx. two meter gap between rows of seats.
  - b. **Approximate Capacity to accommodate social distancing (excluding the chancel):**
    - i. **St Lawrence Long Buckby: 90**
    - ii. **St Peter and St Paul Watford: 120**
    - iii. All Saints West Haddon: 40
    - iv. St Michael and All Angels: 20
  - c. An individual risk assessment will be made if the capacity limit is likely to be exceeded (e.g. West Haddon School Community Worship; and for "Life Events" e.g. baptisms, weddings, funerals). In these circumstances additional measures may be put in place. These may include:
    - i. Face coverings to be worn throughout the service
    - ii. Restricting numbers
    - iii. Limiting/avoiding singing by the congregation
  - d. A booking system may be used where significant numbers of people are expected to attend (i.e. significantly above usual Sunday attendance e.g. for a Benefice Service)
  - e. Churchwardens, assisted by sides people, should be approached regarding special needs or other concerns.
- 3. ATTENDANCE / TEST AND TRACE:** we will continue to note who attends public worship to assist with Test and Trace and for pastoral purposes. We will continue to make the QR Code available as requested by the NHS.
- 4. HAND HYGIENE:** people will be invited to sanitise their hands on entering and leaving the building, and at other times as appropriate.
- 5. SINGING:**
  - a. Congregational singing will be permitted where there is the usual Sunday attendance and social distancing is in place. Face coverings do not need to be worn for singing but can be, of course, if preferred. The exception is Holy Communion at St Lawrence Long Buckby, in order to maximise attendance of those who otherwise do not feel sufficiently safe to attend.
  - b. Congregational singing may not be permitted in larger services (judged on a case by case basis).
  - c. At St Lawrence Long Buckby hymn words will be placed on the screen. In the other churches hymn books or sheets can be used. They should be returned after the service to a locally determined place that does not require sides-people to touch them.
  - d. Single use orders of service will be used at weddings and funerals.
  - e. Singing in the chancel: the organist and singers will socially distance, with a maximum to be determined for each place.
- 6. BELL RINGING:** the Tower Captain will produce a separate Risk Assessment in each tower for the Vicar and churchwardens.
- 7. WELCOME:**
  - a. People who are vulnerable or have special needs are asked to communicate this with the church wardens, sides people or the vicar.
  - b. Information on coping with anxiety produced by the NHS will be signposted.
  - c. St Lawrence Long Buckby will continue to provide weekly worship on-line for the foreseeable future (occasionally services may be broadcast from All Saints West Haddon).
  - d. For on-line worship service and notice sheets can be delivered to those who are unable to access them electronically. Please advise a church warden or the vicar if you would like this.
  - e. We will not ask people if they have been vaccinated.

## 8. HOLY COMMUNION SERVICES

- a. **Different policies may be followed in different churches, or in different services** – this will be publicised
- b. **PREPARATION:** those preparing the table should wear a face covering, and ensure that the bread is covered.
- c. **BREAD:** We will use wafers. Gluten-free wafers are the default at St Lawrence Long Buckby.

## 9. THE COMMUNION SERVICE

- a. **The Peace:** maintain social distancing
- b. **Eucharistic Prayer:** Bread offered to the congregation will remain covered until ready for distribution

## 10. ADMINISTRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION:

We will use the following practices:

**“Simultaneous Administration”:** All Saints West Haddon, and St Lawrence Long Buckby

**“Spotting wafers with wine”:** St Peter and St Paul Watford; St Michael and All Angels Winwick

In either case the communicant should indicate if they wish to receive bread only.

*PLEASE NOTE: We will not use individual cups for the wine at Holy Communion. Legal advice given to the Church of England is that their use is unlawful according to the Sacrament Act of 1547. A contrary legal opinion has been published by the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) who wrote to the House of Bishops in August 2020 asking them to reconsider their advice to churches, but this has not been accepted. I am extremely sympathetic to the case of using individual cups at the present time and to the argument that it is not unlawful, but I do not wish to risk disciplinary action being taken against me.*

### **Simultaneous Administration (based on Church of England Guidance):**

Each communicant receives Communion in both kinds simultaneously in this way:

- a. The communicant must sanitize hands prior to arriving at the place of communion.
- b. The communicant stands at the place of communion and holds out hand(s).
- c. The president takes a piece of bread with their free hand and briefly but carefully touches it to the surface of the wine, allowing some of the wine to suffuse into the bread.
- d. The president places the bread in the communicant’s hand in silence without touching the hand. In cases where receiving in the hands is not possible, such as illness or disability, hands must be sanitized before and after.
- e. The president should take care to avoid the possibility of surplus wine dripping from the bread at the time of administration.
- f. The communicant moves away from the place of communion, removes face covering with free hand, consumes the bread, and replaces the face covering.
- g. If the president accidentally touches the hand of the communicant or any other surface, both president’s and communicant’s hands must be sanitized again.
- h. Communicants may receive in their place.
- i. Once all others have communicated, the president returns the remaining consecrated bread and wine to the table, and receives Communion.
- j. Consecrated bread and wine left over will either be consumed or reserved [the minister will advise communion assistants]

## 11. REFRESHMENTS

We wish to see the return of refreshments as soon as people are ready and a protocol and a rota of helpers is established.

## 12. MAKING OUR BUILDING SAFE

- a. **Ventilation:** doors and windows will be kept open where possible and consistent with security.
- b. **Church cleaning:** usual cleaning methods. If there are two services on a 48 hour period, surfaces e.g. pews and door handles etc be wiped down before the next service
- c. **If someone who has been in one of our buildings contracts COVID:** We will either clean the church following national guidance [wearing gloves and apron]; OR close the building for 48 hours.

### 13. LIFE EVENTS: BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

- a. **ATTENDANCE AND SEATING PLAN:** All life events will require the party to provide a list of those likely to attend, and propose a seating plan in consultation with the minister and church wardens /other authorised church members.
- b. **EACH EVENT WILL REQUIRE A REVIEW OF THE RISK ASSESSMENT.** If the particular event is assessed as presenting additional risks by the vicar, other ministers, or churchwardens e.g. because the number of people involved, the Vicar will ask the party to comply with additional measures to protect the safety and well-being of all involved.
- c. **THESE MEASURES CAN INCLUDE:**
  - i. Face coverings
  - ii. Restricting numbers
  - iii. Limiting/avoiding singing by the congregation
  - iv. Asking people to stay home if unwell
  - v. Consider individual risks for e.g. clinically vulnerable.
- d. **ADVICE IN WRITING:** Parents / couples/ chief mourners will be advised in writing of the COVID measures in place for their event.
- e. **REFUSAL:** The Vicar and other ministers can refuse to take those services they are not obliged to take, and may seek alternative ministerial cover.

### 14. BAPTISMS:

- a. Oil will be used at the signing of the cross – minister’s hands sanitised before and after.
- b. An appropriate adult (not the minister) will hold an infant at the font
- c. The minister will administer baptism using a shell or other suitable method to avoid physical contact with the child.

### 15. WEDDINGS

- a. Couples will be offered the opportunity for “tying the knot”, the Minister using sanitised hands before and after
- b. Signing the Marriage document: all participants to sanitise hands before and after signing.

Revd Graham Collingridge

26/7/21