

The Parish of St Neots with Eynesbury

“When you come to worship”

a guide to good practice by worshippers, and what to expect

April 2021 Version – minor changes from March 2021.

Being allowed to return to church for public worship while COVID-19 is still among us (even as vaccinations continue) is a privilege and a responsibility. It comes with risks: for ourselves, for those immediately around us, and for the wider community. Everything that we do, therefore, is planned to minimise that risk. Please take time to read this, and to re-read it from time to time to refresh your memory about what it contains, so that we can all help each other to stay safe and well.

Basic Principles

- We do not come to church (or leave home) if we or someone in our household is displaying symptoms of the virus.
- Whenever possible, we continue to maintain 2 metres distance from those who are not in our household or ‘bubble’ at all times.
- We must all be regular in our hand-washing and sanitizing.
- We must touch as few surfaces as we possibly can.
- Apart from when leading prayers, preaching, or reading at the lectern (and unless specifically exempt) we will wear masks in church to protect ourselves and others.

To support that, the church will provide sanitizer, arrange seating to maintain distance, and advise you on the appropriate places and routes for particular activities. The Church will also record who attends each service and will retain contact tracing information for each service for 21 days. The crèche areas remain closed, and any children who attend church must, for the time being, remain with their parents or guardians.

Arrival

At many of our services, the numbers arriving may cause no great difficulty. But it is good to observe this practice at all services, and especially at the Sunday 9.30 service at St Neots.

- Allow plenty of time. The pace at which people can enter church will continue to be much slower than normal.
- Bellringers aside, please enter by the North door.
- Keep 2 metres distance from other people / households / bubbles at all times. This may mean waiting at a substantial distance from the church door before coming in.

- Please use hand sanitizer on entering (and leaving) the building, and every time you have touched a door handle.
- Please do not gather in groups in the church grounds to have conversations unless you can maintain social distance, and are well away from the church itself and the main paths.
- Please do not touch door handles unless absolutely necessary - and please touch other rails and furniture as little as you possibly can.
- Please give your name to the steward, so that he/she can record your attendance, in case contact tracing is needed.
- If you are carrying any offering envelopes or cash, please place them directly in the collection plate opposite the entrance door
- On entering please go directly to the available seats (see below, for details of particular services), and remain there until leaving church. It is particularly important not to stop to talk in the main aisles on the north side of church.
- If you need a gluten-free wafer, please ensure that one of the clergy knows well before the service starts. At St Neots Sunday 9.30a.m. you are advised to sit on the North side of church.
- If you carry sanitizer with you, you are encouraged to sanitize your hands immediately before and after receiving communion.
- If you need to leave church while others are entering, please do so by the Tower at St Neots, or the South door at Eynesbury.

8 a.m. Sunday Communion at St Neots (BCP)

The service is at the Nave Altar. The congregation sits on the pale wooden chairs that are spaced round the front half of the Nave. Please do not form groups of more than two, and please do not sit on pews. If you come on your own, please sit on a single seat, not a pair.

If you have the order of service issued first in July 2020, please bring it with you if you can, and take it away again for re-use. Fresh booklets will be available if you don't have one. Please do not hand booklets to others.

When you have responses and prayers to say, please say them clearly and audibly, but quietly. Loud responses should be avoided at all times. Some familiar prayers are only said by the President, to reduce the amount of speaking that's done by everyone together.

Communion is administered in one kind (bread) only, into the outstretched hand, after words of distribution are said to all from the platform. It will be brought to you in your seat.

9.30 a.m. Sunday Communion at St Neots (CW Order One)

Initially, this will be without any singing - but with organ music, as in the summer of 2020. We will start to add extra musical elements as we can. It's not yet possible to do a Sunday School, but we will keep this under review as Spring progresses. Children will need to stay with parents in their pew.

Except in the Chancel, every pew is one household only.

Seating is on those pews that are not taped off, right round the Nave, as well as the chairs against the back wall. Choir members (and their households) are welcome to occupy their customary seats in the Chancel, unrobed, to reduce the number who need to sit in distant parts of the Aisles. Together there are about 55 places for household groups/bubbles, in addition to stewards and ministers. We hope that this will be sufficient for the numbers, but if we find that we are reaching capacity, we may have to say that we can't admit people.

If you have the order of service issued first in 2020, please bring it with you, and take it away again for re-use. Fresh booklets will be available at the desk if you don't have one. Please don't hand booklets to others.

When you have responses and prayers to say, please say them clearly and audibly, but quietly. Loud responses should be avoided at all times. Some familiar prayers are only said by the President or Assistant, to reduce the amount of speaking that's done by everyone together.

Communion is in one kind only (bread), into the outstretched hand.

Those who administer communion at our services have reviewed our distribution practice (with those who steward that administration) in the light of our first four weeks' experience back in church, considering the various risks that different practices present. From 25th April, all members of the congregation in all parts of the church, will receive communion in their seats. You can sit or stand for that as you prefer. If you are sitting at a distance from an aisle and can move closer to the aisle end to receive, please do so. Please bear in mind that administration across a poppyhead pew-end can be a little awkward, and please do not make it necessary for an administrant to reach across one person to communicate another.

There will no longer be standing communion stations.

At the end of the service, the North Door is the main exit, but you may leave by the Tower (two big steps!) if you need to exit quickly. Please wait in your seats until it is clear to move in a socially distanced way. Please sanitise your hands on leaving. If meeting people, do it outside, well away from the door. Ministers will usually be outside, but please maintain distance.

11 a.m. Sunday Communion at Eynesbury (CW Order One)

The congregation sits on the pews that aren't taped off. In each block there is one pew where it is possible for someone to sit at the side aisle end provided that there aren't too many by the centre aisle. There are 16 household spaces in the main pews, 4 in the zoo, and 4 elsewhere plus ministers.

If you have the order of service issued first in 2020, please bring it with you, and take it away again for re-use. Fresh booklets will be available at the desk if you don't have one. Please do not hand booklets to others.

When you have responses and prayers to say, please say them clearly and audibly, but quietly. Loud responses should be avoided at all times. Some familiar prayers are only said by the President, to reduce the amount of speaking that's done by everyone together.

Those who administer communion at our services have reviewed our distribution practice in the light of our first four weeks' experience back in church, considering the various risks that different practices present. From 25th April, all members of the congregation in all parts of the church, will receive communion in their seats. You can sit or stand for that as you prefer. If you are sitting at a distance from an aisle and can move closer to the aisle end to receive, please do so. Please bear in mind that administration across a pew-end can be a little awkward, and please do not make it necessary for an administrant to reach across one person to communicate another.

At the end of the service, the main exit is the North Door, but you may leave by the South Door (big step!) in an emergency. Please wait in your seats until it is clear to move in a socially distanced way. If meeting people, do it outside, well away from the door or paths.

Midweek Communions at 9.30a.m. (CW Order One)

The midweek communions at St Neots on Wednesdays and at Eynesbury on Thursdays adopt the same basic principles and general procedures. The seating will be on pews in the front half of the Nave: communion will be brought to you in your seat.

And finally

We will continue not to place a large quantity of markers on floors. We are trusting that people will know not to "go against the flow", which is in different directions at different times in the service; and that they will understand the importance of distance, both inside and outside church, and especially in the vicinity of doorways and the main aisles.