

A close-up, high-angle shot of a sandy surface, likely a beach. Several dark, well-defined footprints are visible, receding from the bottom left towards the top right. The sand is a light tan color with some darker patches and shadows from the footprints.

1ST AUGUST 2021

**HOLY TRINITY & ST OSWALD, FINNINGLEY &
ST SAVIOUR, AUCKLEY**

MOVING FORWARD

COVID 19

A Review of Covid Restrictions

FINNINGLEY & AUCKLEY CHURCHES

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF

The Bishop of London, Chair of the Church of England Recovery Group said, *"Many will welcome the possibilities now before us...However, this is a difficult point in the course of the pandemic. Despite vaccination rates, cases are up, hospital admissions are up and long covid remains an ongoing concern. Therefore our approach needs to be cautious and careful."*

Taking personal responsibility means responsibility for our neighbour, not just for ourselves, and taking precautions to protect those more vulnerable than we consider ourselves to be."

A SHORT SUMMARY COVERING SUNDAYS APPEARS RIGHT AT THE END OF THIS REPORT - APPENDIX 1

THE NEXT STEPS

As you know the final decision regarding the removal or continuance of COVID measures has been placed in the hands of the incumbent. However, I prefer to manage in a collegiate style whenever possible, and so a survey has been conducted to establish how people felt about certain measures; this report has been put together; and the views of our PCC members sought.

I'm aware that this pandemic is far from over, and that even two vaccination jabs still leaves 10-15% of our members susceptible to catching Coronavirus. In addition, there are many opinions, statistics, studies and rumours doing the rounds. Despite these, the future path of COVID 19 remains stubbornly unknown. Nevertheless, following the reduction in restrictions nationally the Church of England is now inviting us to consider what, if any, changes might be made to our churches life and worship.

Further to making any decisions I'm required to draw up risk assessments for each element. To begin with we'll look at our main Sunday Services, Baptisms, Wedding and Funerals, and in less detail at this stage the potential of Natter, Footprints, and Cafe 3:30 returning later in the year. If things continue to move in a positive direction, then we may consider looking at social events too, but let's not get carried away just yet!

THE RESULTS

There was a tremendous response to the online and paper surveys with 75 being returned, which for any survey is fantastic, and I'm extremely grateful to all those who were able to complete one, it has been a huge help. So, to the results.

RETURNING TO PHYSICAL WORSHIP IN CHURCH

- 60% return if some precautions/measures in place
- 21% not ready to return just yet
- 19% return with no precautions/measures

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- 69% would prefer a 1m rule
- 17% would prefer no distancing
- 13% would prefer a 2m rule

FACE MASKS/COVERINGS

- 73% say they would prefer we kept wearing case masks
- 27% say they would prefer not to wear face masks

THE PEACE

- 79% would prefer we continue signing the peace with no physical contact
- 13% would shake hands
- 8% would hug and/or shake hands

SINGING

- 48% would like to sing, but whilst wearing face masks
- 31% would like to sing, but without face masks
- 21% are not ready to sing just yet

A Note on Singing: *Whilst the majority want to sing, 17% more people want to do so wearing a mask than those wanting to discard them whilst exercising their vocal cords. However, given that 73% overall want to wear masks in church, this doesn't seem to make logical sense to me. Studies on singing vary in their results. Some say singing significantly increases the risk of spreading COVID though increased aerosol transmission, others disagree. However, there are differences in how testing was carried out, and thus the results are not consistent. That given, we would prefer to err on the side of caution.*

COMMUNION

- 95% Bread only
- 5% Bread and wine from the common cup

A Note on Wine: *We have been asked if individual cups (similar to shot glasses) could be used to share the wine. Whilst the Methodist and Baptist Churches employ this method the Church of England doesn't and it would break canon law.*

REFRESHMENTS

- 56% say not yet, I'll have a brew at home
- 36% say yes please, nothing beats a cup of church tea
- 8% don't normally stay

SUMMARISING THE RESULTS

Carol and I have met and decided where our own personal boundaries are, as these help to inform the next steps. The results from the survey are very much in line with our initial thinking, and along with comments that were added, have been a great help in helping discern the road ahead. Furthermore, many indicated that they were happy to go along with, and respect, whatever decision was made even if it didn't match their own. That is hugely encouraging as we seek to love our neighbour.

IN SUMMARY THE RESULTS WOULD INDICATE THE FOLLOWING:

- 81% of the church family are ready to return, with the vast majority wanting some precautions/measures in place.
- Precautions/Measures:
 - Masks to be worn during Sunday services in our church buildings
 - 1m of social distancing to be respected by everyone
 - The Peace to be signed with no physical contact
 - Only the bread/wafer to be consumed at Holy Communion
 - A large majority would welcome the return of singing, but with the wearing of face masks.
- Refreshments
 - Finningley: most respondents aren't yet ready to have refreshments after the service.
 - Auckley is a 50/50 split between yes and no.

FROM MONDAY 2ND AUGUST

After carefully and prayerfully considering the survey feedback, taking into account the health and wellbeing of all attending, considering the accessibility of our Sunday worship, and consulting with both PCC's, the following measures will be put in place from Monday 2nd August.

MAIN SUNDAY SERVICE

General

■ **Booking for services no longer required**

■ **When singing recommences service times will need to revert back.** Therefore, when singing is reintroduced Finningley will revert back to its previous 9:15am start, and Auckley will remain at its original, and current, time of 11.00am

■ Everyone continues to **sanitise their hands** upon entering and leaving

■ Anyone entering the church buildings will be **requested to wear a face mask** unless exempt

■ A **1m (3 foot) social distance rule** is introduced (except for families/bubbles)

■ *We need to keep in mind that some who may now return physically could be nervous and not want any physical contact just yet. We won't necessarily know who they are, so we must be respectful and not make assumptions.*

■ **Rows of chairs are 1m apart**, and to enable a 1m between people sat on rows if they desire it. We will make available cards that can be placed on the seat next to them that say, 'For everyone's safety and well being, please keep this seat free.' Of course, some may be happy to simply ask someone to move up.

■ We **continue to live stream**. Initially over Zoom, but this will change to YouTube if/when singing returns due to copyright rules.

The Service Itself

■ Return to having a **reusable service booklet**, however, not all of the liturgy will be used as we believe it is wise to keep contact time to a reasonable minimum, but we will use the slightly longer Apostles Creed, and change the Eucharistic prayer. We wouldn't use the old service books, rather we will print a simple, reusable service book in black and white. In time, those at home will need a paper copy of the service as displaying the liturgy on YouTube (when we swap over) isn't feasible. Using all the liturgical variants open to us just isn't practical for those at home.

- The **service booklets won't be handed out** by sidespeople to avoid unnecessary contact. Instead we will need to collect them on the way in, and then return them afterwards.
- **Delay singing for a few weeks.** We appreciate that many of us want to sing, However, we don't think it is wise to change everything all at once. Our initial aim is to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and safe in the building, especially those who have not been able to attend physically for over 16 months. With that in mind we would like to give everyone two or three weeks to settle in and we will then review the situation.
 - This may be disappointing to some, however, alongside the aerosol risks, singing also creates another issue regarding copyright. We are not able to live stream using Zoom as doing so infringes copyright. However, are able to live-stream singing using YouTube as we have cover for this platform. However, YouTube doesn't allow interaction, it is more like watching live TV.
 - This would prevent Bible readings and prayers being led from home, requiring all those who help in this way being physically in church, which for some isn't possible due to vulnerable family members. We are currently exploring a work around to help with this such as using prerecording readings or using a phone link, so we can continue to interact with those at home.
- **Singing will be whilst wearing masks** to begin with, and we will only sing four hymns, and not during communion. Singing during communion whilst people are moving around presents more risk. At Finningley the choir won't initially be leading from the front. Despite masks, this potentially puts the organist and those leading in an 'aerosol sandwich'. However, all of this will be reviewed over time.
- **The Peace would be shared using a 'sign' of peace** with no physical contact, unless of course people are from the same family/bubble.
- **Communion would be taken in one kind only - the bread**, with only Carol or Neil consuming the wine. Whilst we will continue to remain standing for communion we can now move forward a row at a time as there is sufficient space at the communion rail to allow an entire row to stand in a line across. Everyone will continue to be asked to sanitise their hands before receiving communion, and Carol and I will continue to wear a mask whilst distributing. We like a good queue, so to ease this at Finningley we will ask the Church Wardens to indicate to each row when to move forward. Also at Finningley, we will ask people to return to their seats via the vestry.
- **Refreshments at Finningley to be delayed** as the majority don't feel ready yet.. However at **Auckley it is a 50/50 split and would be easier to manage** effectively, but would use the church building and not the side room. We can of course review

this in the coming weeks. It's worth noting that if we do want to have refreshments that this would be dependent on having volunteers to provide them.

BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

The proposals for these three occasional offices are

- **Everyone attending to sanitise their hands on entering**
- **Everyone is asked to wear face masks**
- **We maintain a 1m social distance**
- **For any event where more than 50% capacity are present, we will indicate that face masks are *mandatory*,** unless exempt, to comply with our risk assessment and health and safety guidelines. We would consider above 50% to be a crowded indoor space. Thus for Finningley this would be 50, for Auckley 25. (These figures are based on comfortable seating, not the absolute crammed maximum)
 - Funeral directors to be advised, along with wedding couples and baptism families.
 - We have consulted with those who help out at these services to ensure they are comfortable with this and for all three types of service those leading will maintain at least a 3m gap from those attending.
 - Should singing be requested at any of the services, then this will automatically mandate the wearing of masks to both protect the organist and those leading the service, as they are both in the potential range of aerosol spray from those singing.

A note on 'ask' and 'mandate'. We can only ask people to wear masks, and we believe that most will be compliant. However, when more than 50% capacity is reached, we need to move away from 'asking' to 'telling'. A supply of masks will be kept available.

REVIEW

The current rates of infections appear to be falling, but in reality we simply don't know what lies ahead. The trend could continue, plateau, or sadly increase again. If a rise occurs, will the government impose some restrictions once more?

With that in mind, a further review at the end of September would be wise unless any restrictions are imposed before then. As well as a general review, we will also need to consider the annual memorial service, and Remembrance Sunday...and dare I say it... Christmas!

NATTER

We have asked Margaret to consider if Natter could commence again at the start of October, and if so what needs to be put in place to ensure we are health and safety compliant and have a solid risk assessment in place. Once this has been completed we can decide on the best way forward.

CAFE 3:30/FOOTPRINTS

We're aware that the feedback from those who would normally attend Cafe 3.30 is that they want to return, however, we are concerned that we cannot accommodate the previous numbers in a safe manner. Eighty plus adults, babies and active children all eating, sticking, singing, dancing, shouting etc. is fantastic, but also risky. We will therefore ask our families how many want to return in September, and move forward from there.

Footprints at Auckley could, we believe, start again in the way it was previously held, however this would need to be reviewed as numbers increase.

For either event we would request adults wear face masks and everyone sanitises hands upon entering. Food would also need to be offered in pre-wrapped individual packages.

CONCLUSION

These are our proposals for the immediate future, we have tried to think and pray through everything carefully, but we could have missed something. So, please do say if you have something we haven't considered. In addition, if you have questions please do ask, and also share any thoughts or observations.

The plan may not be perfect and it won't be what everyone wants, but as we seek to love our neighbour, ensure corporate worship is available to all in some way, and support those who are vulnerable, we do hope and pray it is the first step of many as we move forward unified under Christ and we commend this report to you.

God bless. Neil and Carol.

APPENDIX 1

A BRIEF SUMMARY

The following measures, agreed by the PCC, Carol and myself, will come into place on Monday 2nd August 2021 and will be reviewed again at the end of September, or earlier depending on the path COVID 19 now takes.

SUNDAY SERVICES

- There is no longer a requirement to book a seat
- Sanitise hands upon entering the church building
- Continue to wear face masks (unless exempt) inside the church building
- Please respect a Social Distance of 1m (3 feet) inside the church building
- Chairs will be arranged to reflect this 1m (3 feet) distance
- Reusable service booklets will be available please collect on entry and put back on leaving.
- Singing will begin in a couple of weeks, however, masks must be worn whilst doing so (unless exempt)
- The peace will continue to be shared with a sign, rather than physical contact. (Except for members of the same household/bubble)
- Sanitise hands before receiving communion
- Communion will continue to be taken in one kind - the bread/wafer
- Neil and Carol will continue to wear a mask whilst distributing
- Remain standing at the communion rail
- Refreshments won't begin immediately at Finningley, Auckley could be different as views differed between the two parishes.

Our primary aim is that everyone feels safe and comfortable in our church buildings, therefore everything isn't changing at once, as some haven't been able to be in our buildings for almost 18 months.

We will continue to review these measures weekly, but as mentioned will have a fuller formal review in September.