



From the Reverend Graham Hamilton
Vicar of PPT Bovey Tracey (St Peter, Paul & Thomas of Canterbury)
and St Mary the Virgin Hennock

St Peter's Vicarage
Coombe Cross
Bovey Tracey, Devon
TQ13 9EP
Wednesday 21 July 2021

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Dear friends,

Step 4 of the Government roadmap came into force on Monday 19 July. This marked a decisive move away from legal restrictions to general guidance, to help each one of us exercise individual responsibility for our actions. We still have to live with the reality of a third wave of COVID infection, mainly among young people and those unvaccinated, but thankfully rates of mortality and hospitalization are only a fraction of what they were before. The government is also mindful of the challenge that will face the NHS when other respiratory diseases circulate in the autumn.



The only remaining legal COVID restriction is our duty to self-isolate if we receive a positive COVID test or are 'pinged' by NHS Test and Trace. The government *expects and recommends* that people wear face masks in crowded areas such as public transport, and *encourages* businesses to use the NHS Covid Pass in high risk settings, but churches do not belong in either category.

The Government has updated its specific guidance for places of worship. The Church of England has updated its guidance. I have consulted with the Churchwardens, PCC members and staff team members in preparing this letter, and updated our Risk Assessment, which can be found on the church website. If you are clinically extremely vulnerable you should take extra precautions to protect yourself.

Covid is now known to be spread primarily by aerosol, so ventilation is more important than surface cleaning. We will make maximum use of open doors and windows while the weather remains warm. *Door handles and frequently touched surfaces will be wiped down between services.* Both our churches are cleaned weekly. Those attending the 9.30am service at PPT will be asked to wipe the pews they sit in and everyone will be asked to return bibles, hymn books and service order they have used to a table as they leave.

We have replaced bibles, kneelers and cushions in the pews, soft furnishings and toys in the children's corner. We will continue projecting words at 9.30am PPT, and use hymn books at 11am, and the weekly notice sheet will no longer contain the words of all the hymns and bible readings, unless there is clear demand for this to continue.

All the legal rules requiring wearing masks indoors, controlling numbers allowed to meet and social distancing have been lifted. This means:

- You no longer need to book to attend services
- You no longer need to wear a face mask, but are free to do so if you wish
- You can sing at all Sunday services.
- If you wish to avoid sung services, there is a said Communion every Wednesday morning at 10am

Some people may be more willing to return to church, now that we no longer need to wear masks and can sing. Others may want to come, but still feel anxious. So we ask you to consider others in the following ways. Please understand that we have no legal right to enforce this guidance. Churches are public venues, and people have a right to worship in them. We depend on people exercising personal responsibility in the light of our suggestions.

- Please continue to use the hand sanitisers at the church door when you arrive and leave.
- Please support the NHS Test and Trace system, either by scanning the QR code on the NHS app on your mobile phone, or by signing the paper record of attendees. This will be destroyed after 21 days.
- Please maintain social distancing if you choose to sit in the pews at the west end of PPT (on the left as you enter by the south porch) for the peace of mind of others around you. You can also take laminated “Please leave this pew empty” cards to place by you.
- Please check before shaking hands with people at the Peace or as you arrive or leave. We will consider other ways of signalling this either through seating areas or visual symbols.

Holy Communion will be administered as follows.

- The bread and wine will remain covered until distribution.
- The ministers will sanitise hands, and distribute the bread and wine in silence while wearing a face mask
- Communion wine will continue to be served in small, individual cups.

At PPT communion will now be served from the chancel communion rail. Communicants should approach through the chancel and depart through the side chapel. The minister will bring communion to those who find access difficult in their pews.

There are no legal rules on shaking hands etc at the Peace, on arriving or leaving, but please be very considerate of those who are not ready for such close contact. I will not refuse to shake your hand, but will not actively offer to shake hands with everyone as they leave, as I cannot sanitise between each handshake!

We will ask those who serve refreshments or act as stewards/sidesmen in church to use face masks when in close proximity to people.

We have waited many months for the restoration of freedoms that we had always taken for granted. I look forward to welcoming many of you back to church services in the coming weeks.

yours in Christ,

Graham Hamilton