

THE ORTHODOX PARISH OF ST EPHRAIM

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PEOPLE

Anyone who may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, or anyone with the symptoms of COVID-19, must stay at home and NOT COME TO THE CHURCH.

1.Services

PLEASE DO NOT COME TO ANY SERVICE WITHOUT BOOKING FIRST.

1.1 It is important that you book individual places for yourself, and any family member who will accompany you, before attending any service. If you have not booked a place - and/or cannot show that you have a reservation - you will not be admitted to the service.

1.2 Numbers attending services will be limited to 30 people, including children of any age. In view of the restriction in numbers you should expect to attend a weekend service - either Great Vespers or Divine Liturgy - only once every two weeks.

1.3 It is a mandatory requirement to wear a face mask in church unless you are certified as belonging to one of the exempt categories. Those who have been certified as exempt must wear a plastic face covering. The fact that you have a certified exemption does not mean that you are not infected and/or cannot be infected by Covid-19.

1.4 Everyone must comply with social distancing of 2 metres.

1.5 **Normally confessions will now be received ONLY at 7.30 on Sunday mornings.** People should write down their sins and hand them to me. I will then give general absolution to those involved. Anyone who is in a vulnerable category, as far as Covid is concerned, and unable to attend services, is welcome to contact me to make special arrangements for Confession and/or Holy Communion.

1.6 Booking is available for all services seven days in advance. Those wishing to attend any service on Saturday or Sunday will need to register online by 12.00 on the preceding Friday. It is important that everyone books online since we need to be able to contact those who have been in church, in the event of anyone who has attended a service, showing symptoms of Covid-19. The list is retained by the Parish for three weeks before it is destroyed.

1.7 A steward will monitor the names and contact information for all those attending the services. Those who have not registered will not be admitted to the church.

1.8 Entry to the church will be via the South Door (on Portugal Place).

2. Ensuring safety during services

General

2.1 There will be a team of stewards to assist in directing people into the church and ensuring that social distancing and other requirements are maintained during the services. They will also be responsible for ensuring the church and its facilities (e.g toilets) are cleaned as necessary at the end of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday.

2.2 The doors of the church will be closed at the time of the Little Entrance (about 10 minutes after the start of the Liturgy) and opened again briefly at the Great Entrance (about 35 minutes after the start of the Liturgy) to admit late comers. The door will then remain locked until the end of the service. In the event of an emergency, any of the three doors of the church can be easily opened.

Procedures

2.3 Upon entering the church each person is to sanitise his or her hands with hand gel provided. The toilets must be cleaned at the end of the service.

2.4 To avoid cross contamination, there will be no commemoration papers/books. Those attending the Liturgy may each submit, electronically, a maximum of 10 names of the living and 10 names of the departed when registering their attendance at the Liturgy. People may make the usual donation when arriving at the church.

2.5 There will be no prosphora for the people to 'send up' to the altar or receive at the end of the Liturgy.

2.6 To avoid cross contamination, candles will be available for sale in bundles of 10 rather than individually.

2.7 There must be **no physical contact between worshippers** in the church since it breaks to social distance rule. Two metres social distancing is to be observed as far as possible. Family members should stand together and space will need to be adjusted accordingly, under the supervision of a steward. Parents remain responsible for the behaviour of their children in church.

2.8 There must be **no kissing of icons, the Gospel, the Cross or the hand of the priest**. Veneration of icons, the Gospel and the Cross must only be by making the sign of the Cross as usual, then bowing to the icon but not kissing it. The Cross will not be 'given' at the end of the Divine Liturgy; the priest will give a general blessing with the Cross at the end of the Post-Communion Prayers.

2.9 The choir will consist of a maximum of four people. They will stand at the front of the church, about three metres from the foot of the steps, and will maintain social distancing as far as possible.

2.10 Each family is asked to come to Holy Communion as a group. The Body and Blood of Christ will be given using individual metal spoons, which will have been sanitised before the Liturgy.

2.11 Zipifka will be available. One of the stewards, wearing latex gloves, will pour a small amount into individual paper cups. The cups should be disposed of after use into a bin which will be placed by the table. The cups will be put into the recycling bin outside the church after the service.

2.12 The clerestory windows (the windows at the top of the north and south walls of the church) will be opened during the services to assist in the circulation of air. You are advised to dress warmly to take account of this during the winter months.

3. Ensuring safety after services

3.1 At the end of the service, directed by a steward, the people should walk two metres apart towards the front of the nave, then back up the north aisle and leave the church promptly. Unless you intend to help with 'taking down' icons and moving pews, do not remain in the church. **Leave the building promptly, do not loiter outside the church and maintain social distancing.**

3.2 There will be no Coffee Hour or Church School until further notice.

3.3 When counting cash at the end of the service, those involved must wear latex gloves. A sheet of paper, or something similar, should be placed on the surface on which the money is being counted to avoid contamination from the cash.

3.4 Following the Divine Liturgy each Sunday, the stewards will supervise the cleaning of all door handles, railings and surfaces using anti-bacterial cleansing wipes. They will also remove the cups used for zipifka, paper from the tray etc.

Rev 08

Fr Raphael Armour
07 January 2021