

## **Douglas Union with Frankfield**

### **COVID-19 – Return to Public Worship**

This document is for your information as we prepare to gradually reopen our churches for public worship in the month of July. Limiting the spread of Covid-19 is the responsibility of us all. While we want you to feel safe as you attend services, it needs to be emphasised that just as shopping, educational, social and sporting activities have all had to change, so too will your experience of Sunday worship. Human and financial resources are limited and so we will not be able to do everything in the way we once did. For the summer months, not all churches will be open for worship every Sunday and only one service may be held in a church. Just as in wider society, there are progressive phases of activity, so too will there be a step by step return to a 'new normal' in the parish. This document has been put together after considerable thought and prayer, in consultation with the Select Vestry and the Bishop and in the light of medical and government advice and may be subject to change.

**Information to Parishioners:** Weekly emails will be issued over the summer providing information on the services to be held that Sunday.

#### **Before coming to church ask yourself**

- Do I have any of the symptoms of COVID-19?
- Have I been in contact with anyone who has COVID-19?
- Am I considered in a vulnerable health category and does this worry me?

If the answer is yes to any of the above, then please stay at home and do not come to church. Some form of worship online using the parish YouTube channel will be available over the summer months and a service leaflet will continue to be sent to all those on the parish email list until the end of August.

- Bring tissues and a pen with you. Facemasks/ coverings are suggested as per HSE advice but are not compulsory.

#### **On arrival at church**

- Please keep 2m social distance at all times on the road outside the church and in church carparks.
- Do not arrive too early expecting to get into church. As at shops, entry will be by queue with social distancing. If the church reaches seating capacity, you will be informed by the church warden on arrival.
- When entering the church, look for the markings on the porch floor so that you maintain social distance when sanitising your hands. The sanitiser must be used by **all people** entering church.
- Do not take prayer books or hymn books from the shelves. You will not need them. Service sheets will be provided in the pews.
- Inside the church, please only sit in the pews permitted. No more than two individuals can sit in a pew (at either end) or one family group from the same household may sit together in one pew.
- While there may be some music in worship, congregational singing may be limited or prohibited until advised otherwise.

- In July, except for the 8.30 service in Blackrock, all services will be Morning Prayer or Services of the Word. Services will be shorter than prior to Covid-19. At services of Holy Communion and Holy Baptism, the relevant Church of Ireland protocols will be followed, and these will be explained to you in advance.
- There will be no physical exchanging of the 'sign of peace' at Holy Communion services.
- There will only be a retiring collection with the alms dish placed appropriately near the door of the church. Parishioners are encouraged to set up direct debits if they prefer not to handle envelopes.
- If you begin to feel unwell during a service or get a fit of coughing or sneezing, please leave the church. This also applies to clergy, lay readers, organists and other parish workers.

### **When the service is over**

- At the end of the service, you will be asked to write your name, and the names of any family members in the pew with you, using your own pen on the service sheet and place it in the box provided near the exit. This is for the purposes of contact tracing should it be necessary.
- You are asked to leave in an orderly fashion always keeping social distance.
- You will have to sanitise your hands again as you leave church.
- No tea or coffee may be served at the end of the service.
- The clergy will not be in the porch to greet you as you leave but weather permitting may go outside the church to converse with parishioners at a distance.
- Please do not congregate in the porch or outside the church. You are encouraged to stay to talk to each other, but please always keep 2m social distance.
- If you develop Covid-19 and are advised that you may have been contagious when at church, please phone the rector immediately so that contact tracing may be put in place.

### **Use of church during the week.**

- There will be no mid-week services for the time being.
- As it is vital that a period of 72 hours is kept before and after services. In general funerals will only take place from noon on Wednesday to noon on Thursday.
- It is important that the churches are kept sealed during the week and so apart from the period between noon on Wednesday to noon on Thursday, no one should enter the church for any purpose. Cleaning etc should only be done mid-week and appropriate cleaning equipment and products will be supplied to those cleaning by the parish.
- For the months of July and August, there will be no flowers in church.

### **A Prayer as we reopen our churches**

Creator God, not limited by time or space; your Son worshipped in synagogue and Temple, and your Spirit came in power on the disciples as they met in the Upper Room. By that same Spirit, guide us as we prepare to reopen the churches in this parish. May they be places of safety, where all feel your welcome, experience your love and are equipped in your service. We pray for those who through age or vulnerability will continue to worship at home, that together we may all rejoice in your goodness and know your blessing, until we can offer unceasing praise in your heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.