

HINKSEY CATHOLIC PARISH

THE LODGE, HOLY ROOD CHURCH, ABINGDON ROAD, OXFORD OX1 4LD

Parish Priest **Fr Daniel Lloyd**

Telephone **07584 323915**

dlloyd@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Parish Secretary **Dr Maria Brown**

Telephone **01865 247 986**

hinksey@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

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Letter to Church Users: Oxford City Tier 2/High Level Coronavirus Restrictions

Dear All,

I hope newer users of our premises are finding their feet, and more established users are continuing to cope with doing things a bit differently. As you may have heard, on Saturday 31 October, Oxford City moves into Tier 2/High Level local Coronavirus restrictions. The new restrictions ask different things of us in our home and working lives, but as far as what we have been doing in church buildings, they do not really change any of the things we have been permitted to do up until now. The only way to avoid catching Covid-19 or passing it on to someone else is to avoid being in contact with people full stop. However, what we can do, and have been doing, is trying to make the contact we do have as safe as it can be. This new change in tier/level reminds us of the importance of continuing to do well all the things we have been doing so far, and so I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate what we should all be doing to continue to help keep one another safe.

Some of what this letter contains applies to everyone entering church premises, some only to particular groups, but the same basic points govern all activities: **Hygiene** and **Distance**. As the UK Government website reminds us: **Stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1 metre with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings or increasing ventilation indoors)**.

BEING IN THE BUILDING WITH OTHERS | Distancing requirements must be followed while people are sitting or standing in one place for more than a few minutes: one group or individual must keep at least 1 metre apart from another group or individual when wearing face coverings, or at least 2 metres if not. Moving around should be kept to a minimum. Events likely to have a significant number of people at them must take bookings in advance so that this rule can be followed: if more people ask to come than there is space to accommodate them, you will need to tell some people that they cannot come because the building is at capacity. You could organise a rota, or some other way of making sure as many people can come as often as possible, but it may well mean that not everyone who wants to come each time is able to.

CONTACT TRACING | All those who enter church premises must sign in. Individuals must do so for themselves, families can choose one person to do it for them. This is normally done either by using the scannable QR code which works with the Test and Trace phone app, or by signing in on the sheet in the church porch. Because signing in is tied to place rather than activity, if you keep your own list of attendees, a copy should be sent to the parish office so that we can have all the information we need.

CLEANING | Anything we touch or sit on must be cleaned after use. You can either do this using the sanitising wipes/spray sanitiser and paper towels, or with the fogging machine if you have been shown how to use it. Used wipes etc. should be disposed of in the blue bin at the back of church. Any papers (for example service sheets or musical scores) must either be taken home by those who have used them, properly stored, or disposed of.

FURNITURE | If you move any of the furniture in church for any reason, please put it back as you found it, cleaning it where you have come into contact with it.

MASSES AND OTHER RELIGIOUS SERVICES | As well as all the above, and what has been circulated by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, every Mass or other service in our churches must operate under the following rules of the Diocese of Portsmouth, in the update of 18 September:

Hinksey Catholic Parish is a parish of the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Registered Charity N° 246871
www.hinkseyparish.org



A Cantor, or small group of cantors, are now allowed to sing in Church, however congregational singing is still not permitted. Any music group should be kept to a small set number of people and should stand a safe distance from each other and the rest of the congregation. The congregation should be reminded not to join in with the singing. Any shared instruments (or instruments owned by the Church) should be cleaned between uses.

Shared facilities for Children for use during Mass (e.g. Creches or play corners) should be put out of use. Children's liturgies should not resume as the government advises children should remain under their parents' supervision during worship.

The congregation are permitted to speak the responses to the Mass but must not sing or say the responses with raised voices.

Priests should encourage Communicants to receive communion in the hand, however, if a person wishes to receive communion on the tongue, they may not be denied. People wishing to receive communion on the tongue should be advised to receive last and to take adequate steps to ensure that no physical contact is made (i.e. kneeling and opening their mouths wide).

Communion remains under one kind only, with only the priest distributing the host. Other than wearing a mask, the priest should distribute communion in the normal way without variation.¹

CHOIRS AND OTHER MUSIC GROUPS | The advice given is subject to a degree of interpretation, and to whether organisers and individuals are happy to proceed. The Incorporated Society of Musicians gives the following reading of the rules: please look through them carefully to consider whether you can continue safely and appropriately with your rehearsals:

Those groups in Medium and High alert levels can continue to meet in COVID-secure venues.

[C]urrent DCMS guidance for performing arts states that 'In a COVID-secure venue or public outdoor place, non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between separate and distinct groups of no more than 6 (In Medium areas and outdoors) or individual households (in High and Very High areas) at any time (depending on Local Covid Alert Level restrictions).'¹

There is a clear implication here that groups can meet in numbers exceeding six in total provided that no single sub-grouping exceeds six individuals, and that social interaction between these different subgroupings are strictly curtailed.

Musicians must wear a face covering inside a venue when not rehearsing or performing.²

I am very grateful to everyone for how we have been able to manage so far, and I do appreciate how complicated this can be. Those of us who use these buildings need to make sure that it remains safe to do so for ourselves and others. If you have any questions, please contact the parish office using the details given above.

With my prayers and best wishes,



¹ <https://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/coronavirus>.

² <https://www.ism.org/advice/easing-the-lockdown-choirs-and-amateur-music-groups>.