

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of the British Isles and Ireland

ARCHDIOCESAN POLICY CONCERNING OPENING THE CHURCHES FOR SERVICES AS FROM 1st AUGUST 2020

An Instruction to All Parishes from His Eminence, Metropolitan Silouan

The UK Government Guidance for the conduct of worship in the churches may be found here. It should be strictly adhered to. It will be amended from time to time.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july>

You are to observe the following:

1. **Before opening to public worship** you, along with the members of the parish council and any other body with responsibility for the parish, are to read the government guidance and confirm to me that you are strictly following the guidance. **You may do this by emailing me and only then will I give your community a blessing to open:** without this you do not have a blessing to serve the Liturgy in an open church nor any other divine service.
2. **This is how you will administer Holy Communion:** -
 - a) Use one spoon.
 - b) Tell the person who is going to take the Communion to stand far away from you and to tip his/her head up with opened mouth.
 - c) Stretch your hand as long as it goes above long red kalima.
 - d) With the holy spoon, you can drop the Holy Communion in their mouth without touching it.
 - e) When you give Communion, you should put beside you a small table with a cup containing hot water and wine. If you, by accident, touch someone's mouth with the spoon, put the spoon into the hot water and wine to sanctify it and then clean it with the kalima, and continue to give the Holy Communion.
 - f) After consuming and cleaning the chalice, you should do the same with this additional cup.
3. **Antidoron may be given at the end of the service.** Strict hygiene standards must be observed, and the piece of bread must be given by a person who has washed hands thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds, and wears gloves: the bread may be dropped into each person's hand.
4. **No other mysteries of the Church** — certainly baptisms, but also chrismations, weddings and funerals — may be served without my direct blessing and guidance for each occasion.
5. **Social distancing is to be maintained at 2 metres between families.** This may be reduced to "1m+" only if mitigations are made. It is good practice, wherever possible, to have different routes for entry and exit. Hand sanitizer stations should be at the entrance and exit.
6. **The Liturgy has no maximum number of people allowed to attend** but may be limited by appropriate risk assessments. The maximum number of people who may be present for weddings and funerals is 30.
7. **Neither icons nor the Cross should be kissed.**
8. **There should be no singing nor projecting of voices.** Microphones and speakers should be used, where possible, and the priest and chanter should read in a speaking voice.
9. **Where possible cash donations should be discouraged, if unavoidable, cash should be collected in one place and handled by one person only.**
10. **A register system of all those present** needs to be created and administered strictly to facilitate the NHS Test and Trace service. These records need to be kept for at least 21 days.
11. The regulations allow for toilets to be open so long as appropriate hygiene standards are maintained: however, **I recommend that all toilets are closed.**

