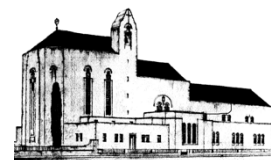


# THE PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT COLUMBA, ANFIELD

## 'MISSIONARY DISCIPLES: POINTING PEOPLE TO JESUS'



### THE VICAR

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Re: Face Coverings in Church

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020

Dear Friends,

In my correspondence to you last weekend, I informed you that the Church of England had 'strongly advised' the wearing of masks or other face coverings during public worship. As per the Prime Minister's statement yesterday, in light of a rise in the infection rate in some parts of the country, further social distancing measures are being implemented. For us as a Church, this means that the wearing of face coverings and masks will be made compulsory from 8<sup>th</sup> August, this will become the law, as per the current system in shops and public transport. In short, this means when attending any service of public worship in Church, **if you are able to wear a mask, then you should.**

Last week, some people chose to wear a face covering, others did not, this was a personal choice because at that stage face coverings were not compulsory; the situation has changed and thus we will be required to do so. Could I please ask that if you are coming to Church, to bring a mask with you **from this Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> August.** Whilst the law will not change for a week, it would be beneficial I feel for us to get in to the habit.

Please let me be clear – I understand that this is far from perfect – I know that masks are uncomfortable and can cause other issues, particularly to those who wear glasses – but at this stage we have no choice; if we wish to attend Mass we need to comply, unless you have a legitimate reason not to refrain. The government has indicated that, and I quote (in italics):

*You do not need to wear a face covering if you have a legitimate reason not to. This includes (but is not limited to):*

- *young children under the age of 11 (Public Health England do not recommended face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)*
- *not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability*
- *if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress*
- *if you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate*
- *to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others*
- *to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you*
- *to eat or drink if reasonably necessary*
- *in order to take medication*

**Therefore, if you have a relevant medical reason not to wear a face covering, then you are exempt from doing so in Church.**

It is important to note that you will not be challenged if you come to Church and are not wearing a mask, it will be assumed that you have a legitimate reason not to do so. However, as I have made clear, if you can (even if you do not like masks – which many people do not) you should wear one. **I will be wearing one at all celebrations of the mass.**

Naturally, the mask will have to be removed momentarily in order to receive Holy Communion. I am not going to prescribe how this should be done, the removal of the mask for this purpose will be down to you, however, one option may be that you simply gel your hands, remove the loop from one of your ears with one hand, and receive communion in the other, re-fix your mask and then gel your hands immediately. Hand gel will be placed at the front of Church so that this can be carried out appropriately.

I know that this will be frustrating for some members of the congregation, but I would simply say, that I am trying to do my best at this challenging time to keep the Church open, safe and compliant for all people. Could I ask you please to continue to sanitize your hands on entry, before receiving communion and on exiting the building, and at any other point when it is requested. Likewise, to maintain social distancing in Church, as per our arrangements.

I apologise for the length of this letter once again and its somewhat prescriptive nature, I would urge you to remember the simple phrase for Church: **if you can, then you should.**

Things of course may change once again, so please be aware that this may be provisional.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, I will do my best to answer any queries you may have.

With every blessing,

Fr Daniel