



**The Reverend Sue Beverly  
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Dear Parishioners

## **Worship in St John's Anglican Church, Ōtūmoetai from Advent Sunday**

I am writing to let you know that, following an update to the Diocesan Guidelines, Vestry has agreed modified arrangements for Sunday services with effect from Advent Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

**Both the 8.30am and the 10.00am Sunday services will be held in church.** These will be services of the **Holy Eucharist**, as will the **Wednesday 10am** service. The 10am Sunday service will be broadcast via Zoom. *You do not need to book in advance for Sunday or Wednesday services.*

*Please read this letter carefully so you understand the protocols we will be following for the health and safety of all who attend and for the wider community. I have tried to be as brief as possible but there are many factors which go towards keeping ourselves safe. Please do not be intimidated by all this – we are not being unthinkingly rigid – we are following Government and Diocesan instructions. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.*

We hope that those who attend services in church are fully vaccinated. We are not currently mandating this, and we will not be checking at the door. We just ask and trust. Unvaccinated people are much more likely to get Covid and pass it on. We anticipate that some people attending, while vaccinated, have underlying health issues that make them vulnerable and we want to keep them safe. If you are not yet vaccinated and wish to worship in church, please speak to me about what other options there may be. If you are not well, please stay home.

### **Arrival and physical distancing**

- **Please arrive early** so there is no rush and people can keep at least 1 metre apart outside the church and enter the building safely.
- Please **keep at least 1 metre distance from other worshippers not in your household group.**
- **Masks are mandatory** – please put your mask on before entering church and do not remove it until after you leave except briefly when you receive communion (see below).
- **Please sign in using the Covid Tracer App** or write your details on the contact sheet.
- Your attendance will be noted on a **parish register** so you do not need to wear your badge.
- Please **sanitise your hands.**
- Place any foodbank donation in a basket in the foyer.
- If you are not able to make your financial donation any other way, please put your cash in a collection plate. However, we prefer online banking – it is the safest method for all of us.
- As you enter the church itself, the seating arrangements will be explained. **Please go straight to your seat and, apart from leaving it to receive communion, remain there until the end of worship** (except in case of emergency).
- **After worship**, please leave the building maintaining physical distancing and without gathering inside to chat.

### **Holy Communion**

- Communion will be in one kind (bread only).
- The Presiding Priest will be diligent about hand hygiene prior to handling wafers, will wear a mask during the Eucharistic Prayer (to protect the bread) and during the distribution of Communion.

- Apart from at the altar (see above), the clergy and others assisting with the service may remove their mask if they are speaking from the front. At all other times they will be masked.
- You will be ushered forward to receive Communion at the steps in front of the altar. Please keep 1 metre from others and return to your seat via the side aisles.
- The Presiding Priest will distribute the wafers to members of the congregation who will receive the wafer in their hand, move aside from the location of reception and then lift their mask to place the wafer in their mouth.

### **Congregational singing**

- There is conflicting advice and vague guidance available. In principle we know that the Delta variant is highly transmissible in the air as aerosolised droplets and so we should be cautious about singing as a congregation.
- The hymns in our services will, for the time being, be recorded sung hymns (as for our Zoom services).
- In simplest terms the safest response is not to have singing, but if you wish to hum along or sing along very quietly then you may but please keep your mask on.

### **Morning Tea**

- This will not be available initially. However...
- Vestry is comfortable that, at a later date, once we see how the situation develops, we explore the option of offering morning tea following services on the understanding that we follow the principles for how we experience hospitality at cafes and restaurants.

### **Christmas**

- Christmas will be different from our previous experiences. There are some additional considerations to be worked through, not least because congregation numbers may be greater than for Sundays and because we may have visitors. I will communicate with you separately once I have agreed a way forward with Vestry.

While it may seem counter intuitive that these changes are being made when Covid-19 is spreading throughout the country, they are being introduced in the recognition that we need to learn to live with Covid-19 and acknowledge that vaccination rates among the population are higher than when the current restrictions were introduced in August. We are in a rapidly changing situation and these arrangements are likely to change once the Covid Protection Framework (Traffic Lights) is introduced.

We must remember that COVID-19 remains a serious threat to health. If we all follow these procedures, we are expressing our love for our neighbour and keeping everyone as safe as possible.

I am looking forward to gathering with you in St John's to share the sacrament once again.

With every blessing

*Sue*

Loving God, we pray for your love and compassion  
as we walk through these challenging times.

We ask for wisdom for those who bear the load  
of making decisions with widespread consequences.

We pray for those who are suffering with sickness  
and all who are caring for them.

We ask for protection for older and vulnerable people.

We pray for misinformation to be curbed  
that fear may take no hold in hearts and minds.

As we exercise the good sense that you in your mercy provide,  
may we also approach each day in faith and peace,  
trusting in the truth of your goodness towards us.