



# St Bridget's, West Kirby with Caldy Church

*Seeking to follow Jesus with open hearts, open minds and open hands*

## **Lockdown Extra from the Rector**

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### **LOCKDOWN 21**

Over the last 24 hours I have spent much time considering our response to the latest lockdown. I have received communication from Bishop Mark and two points particularly stood out for me in his letter and have helped influence my decision:

*'I encourage you to consider how we as clergy continue to offer a visible sign of our prayerful support of the communities we serve'*

*'Our safety measures and our vast drafty buildings have been very effective with national figures showing 1 COVID case per 25,500 church services'*

I have also been in contact with Archdeacon Mike Gilbertson and I have met with or spoken to all churchwardens and deputy wardens.

I have listened to a whole range of opinions which have arrived via email, over the phone and in person and I have been involved in a number of group discussions where the opinions have been diverse. I have prayed and reflected and tried to look not just one week ahead but potentially 6 or 8 weeks. I am mindful that several people who currently attend worship have received their second dose of the vaccine. I also know that cases continue to rise.

After all this consultation, reflection, and prayer I have made the following decision about worship in church.

**In-person worship will continue but with some additional restrictions and alterations.**

I believe we have done a very good job of introducing as safe an environment as we can, and the wider team has been incredibly supportive of this. Our weak spot seems to be at the beginning and end of worship when mingling is a temptation. There has also been a slight relaxation generally which we need to tighten again.

**This Sunday** we will have services of Holy Communion:

8am at St Bridget's - Alex to preside

10am at Caldry - Dave C to preside

10am at St Bridget's - Alex to preside

Those at extra risk and the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' will be strongly advised in the newsletter of the risks of attending public worship and will be encouraged to access worship online. I am hugely grateful for everyone who makes that possible.

No-one who is over 80 or in a clinically extremely vulnerable group will lead worship. Those over 70 may do so but are advised that they are considered to be in an increased risk group.

There will be no expectation that anyone leads worship or takes on any responsibility who is not comfortable to do so.

Those leading worship will be asked to use their own communion sets and to clear these away after the service. This reduces the need for others to be in the vestry.

Vestments will only be worn by one person on a Sunday.

Those leading worship will wear face masks when not actively leading/speaking

The service will be kept simple with a short sermon to limit the time spent in the building (30 mins)

All pews not cordoned off will be cleaned prior to the 10am service by Dave Wright at St Bridget's.

Clear guidance will be given in the newsletter and more posters with reminders will be placed within the church buildings

Reminders will be given at the beginning and end of the service about maintaining distance and leaving the building promptly after the service. Those leading will wait at the chancel step until people have left and will not go outside.

Mingling will be rigorously discouraged and if it continues, we will have to review whether continued in-person worship is possible.

Reminders will be given at the beginning of the service about correct wearing of face masks and an explanation that if this is not adhered to, we will have to review the decision to keep the church open.

I know that some of you will be disappointed whilst others will be pleased. I am clear that I do not want to put people at increased risk and will do all I can to protect lives but also want to help people live life as fully as they can within the current restrictions. I am always willing to rethink, and if more evidence comes to light which suggests that worship in church is not safe then I will reconsider our decision.

Thank you for your willingness to share your thoughts and your ongoing support. This has not been an easy decision and I know that as a team we have a variety of opinions. Please continue to hold one another in prayer. My hope and prayer is that we can continue to offer a safe place for prayer, sacrament and worship and might be a beacon of hope and reassurance.

Thank you, with love

*Alex*