

Refreshments at events.

For many of us Harvest Festival and in some cases Plough Sunday means lunches or suppers and of course this year will be very different.

We cannot expect or encourage the large jolly gatherings we have had in the past with groaning tables from a Bring and Share meal, cold buffets with help yourself salads or even, as in some of my parishes, a cooked meal with a choice of main courses with every cook secretly hoping their dish will be the most popular.

Enough nostalgia!

Present circumstances **will not** prevent us from celebrating our harvest and our farmers. We are just going to have to do things differently and very carefully.

Having modified and adapted our Services for Harvest this year, let us now think about refreshments.

Firstly, the venue. If it is at all possible get outside, into someone's garden, a paddock or even your churchyard. Encourage everyone to bring their own folding chair and a warm jacket.

Ask around the parish. Has anyone got a gazebo or shelter that they would be happy to lend (and come and erect for you)?

Family groups or bubbles can stay together.

If outside is not possible, is there a barn or similar that could be used? Again everyone bringing their own chairs.

If the Harvest Celebration is to be held indoors. perhaps in your hall, this must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised beforehand and afterwards. Windows and doors should be open and groups should be distanced as much as possible.

A hand sanitiser station needs to be at the entrance of your venue, and everyone encouraged to use it.

Loos and hand wash basins need to be sanitised regularly and someone needs to check there is a good supply of paper towels. Terylene hand towels must not be used, and hot air dryers need regularly wiping with a proprietary sanitiser or wipes.

Gatherings in parishioners homes should be discouraged as there is rarely scope for distancing.

The maximum number for an indoor celebration is at present 30. This includes organisers and helpers.

As for the food, the easiest option is for everyone to bring their own picnic and preferred drink.

Bring and share food or food provided by the local "catering" committee are **NOT** encouraged under the present circumstances.

If the parish are providing hot drinks, then use disposable, compostable cups and the servers need to add milk and sugar rather than individuals handling spoons etc. Individuals then deposit their used cups themselves into a black bag for disposal.

Any equipment used, teaspoons, teapots etc must be well washed in hot water and detergent both before and after use and dried with disposable kitchen paper towel.

It goes without saying that anyone serving drinks should be very diligent about hand hygiene with 20 second hand washing or the use of hand sanitiser. They should also be wearing a face mask or visor.

Social distancing rules and wearing of masks etc will still apply whether your gathering is indoor or out.

Finally. Whoever is in charge needs to make a list with names and telephone or email addresses of EVERYONE attending in case of an outbreak. This is for the Track and Tracing service.

This should be kept in a safe place. Perhaps the church safe for 28 days after which it can be destroyed in a secure way.

It will be different but it can still be fun.