

## **THE REOPENING OF THE CHURCH FOR WORSHIP**

**Dear Friends**

**As you will no doubt have heard from the Government information sessions, Churches have been able to open for worship for a few weeks now. Only after a thorough risk assessment has taken place, safeguards have been installed in the building and the Presbytery have given the go ahead that they recognise that the congregation's plans are in line with the Government's and the National Church's guidelines are we in fact able to proceed.**

**We have been given that permission, and the Kirk Session decided that we could open for worship with effect from 23<sup>rd</sup> August at 11.00a.m.**

**The arrangements for Church, like the arrangements for all else in life just now, have changed and you will not find the worship experience the same as before. This is the current instruction we have to follow nationally: it is our hope and prayer that it will change as life becomes safer and we can operate with less of a threat from Covid-19. Just now our priority is safety for all who choose to become involved and I wish to stress emphatically that only if you feel comfortable, at ease with our safeguards, and relaxed about your own health situation should you consider attending worship. No one will criticise you or think any the less of you if you feel unable to participate just now: you can support the congregation from afar as before.**

**Please note the following points:**

- You will be welcomed outside the building, given guidance and then escorted into Church by volunteers, following a socially distanced one-way system.**
- You must wear a face mask or covering unless you are medically exempt from doing so. If you do not have a face mask, we shall make one available at the door.**
- You must provide your name and a contact telephone number on entering to facilitate the Government's Track**

and Trace arrangements if required. Your details will be kept with the date for 28 days and then disposed of.

- Hand sanitiser will be available for your use at least on entry and exit.
- You will be guided to a seat where you will be socially distanced from others: this will be shown by signs with ticks on a green background. Couples from the same household, families and people in the same bubble can sit together in the designated areas. Others must sit alone. It is unlikely that people will be able to sit in their usual seats because of this. The galleries will not be used. Only designated pews with restricted numbers are allowed. Cushions will be available for those who use them but they must be returned to a volunteer at the exit door so that they can be thoroughly cleaned.
- The maximum number of worshippers at any given time is 50. At the start we do not consider this will be a difficulty: if after the second week it proves to be, the Kirk Session will consider additional provision which will be explained then.
- Music will be part of worship, but no singing is permitted at the present time.
- No hymn books or bibles will be available, nor will there be an order of service on paper: instead readings and intimations will be projected in large print on the screens.
- You will be guided out as in, some by the back door, socially distancing at all times. Social distancing is encouraged in the car park as well.
- At present we are not allowed fellowship time over tea and coffee: as soon as that changes, we shall make the appropriate arrangements.
- The service will be shorter: most weeks about 30 minutes. We are allowed to celebrate baptisms, but the Kirk Session decided that the September diet of Communion will not take place this year as it is felt that it is too soon after our start of worship.

Although worship is restarting, I shall continue to post a reflection on Facebook and the Website each week for the

**foreseeable future and we shall continue to publish the devotional booklets for those with no internet access.**

**Funerals and Marriage Services can now take place in Church if they follow the national guidelines. If you would like to arrange such a service, please speak to me.**

**All this only applies to worship. Arrangements for organisations attached to the congregation and external lets will be dealt with on an individual basis following separate risk assessments and guidelines. Our advice is that these may not restart at present: we shall keep in touch with group leaders and advise when this has changed.**

**This is the current shape of the new normal. It will not always be like this, but our priority concern is your safety and that all we do co-operates with the national containment of the virus. Can I encourage you to participate as much as you wish and urge you to contact me directly if you have any worries or concerns rather than sit alone with these unanswered? I shall ensure you get an answer within 24hours.**

**Castlehill Church continues and will do. Can I crave your patience and co-operation while we re-establish our congregational life over what will be a substantial period? Can I also thank you for your support in this and all the unusual issues we have to face at this time? Please be reassured that we can look forward with hope as long as we care for each other.**

**With every blessing.**

**Paul**