

Dear friends,

It has been a challenging few months now since we had to cease meetings in our church building, but there is good news – the Church Council would like to trial reopening for in-person worship on two Sundays – 11th and 18th October. If all goes well, we hope then to be able to continue to open for in-person worship every Sunday morning. The bad news is that it won't be the same as we have been used to, but I'm sure that you realised that things will have to be different – at least for the time being.

It has been wonderful to be able to keep in contact through our shared worship on Sunday mornings over 'Zoom' - the marvels of technology have been a godsend for us in more ways than one! So we are not looking at replacing our Zoom worship, but we have been working hard to get things ready so that some might now be able to meet in our building to pray, to hear God's Word and reflect on it together. We have had to undertake a full risk assessment, and make preparations so that we can keep each other safe.

We know that gathering in person will not be a possibility for everyone yet. Each of us has to assess the risks we are able to take, so please don't feel under any pressure or obligation – we want you to be safe and well! We hope that you will be able to, or continue to, join our worship via Zoom even if it isn't yet time for you to come back in person.

So how will it look?

1. You will need to book a place (sorry, we can't have 'season tickets' – we will have to do this each week). To book your place phone Judith on 02476 396085 between 4pm and 8pm on the Thursday before. We will need to have contact details for you, which will be kept for 21 days. There will be a limit on the number attending so that we can sit with appropriate social distancing. On current guidance we can accommodate 17 worshippers.
2. If you have any of the COVID symptoms (new persistent cough, a high temperature, a loss or change in sense of smell or taste) you should not come (you should be self-isolating anyway!).
3. When you arrive at the Church someone will tick your name off on the list of bookings, check your temperature with a contactless thermometer and ask you to sanitise your hands (we will have hand gel just as when you go into shops).

4. You will have to wear a face covering when you come into the building (it's the law, unless you have a medical exemption) - this should cover your mouth and nose.
5. There will be a one way system through the church – we will enter through the main doors and leave by the Fire Exit onto the alleyway by the Co-op. We will need to take seats starting from those furthest away from the entry (sorry, but we can't take our 'usual' seats – the aim is to minimize people walking past each other)
6. We will need to sit keeping social distance between us (we'll have a reduced number of chairs set out, you can move your chair to sit with someone from your own household, but we need to have 2 metres (6½ feet) between people in different households).
7. Sadly, we cannot have congregational singing during our worship (although we can use music in other ways) and our responses and spoken prayers (such as The Lord's Prayer) will need to be quieter.
8. We can't stay and chat after the service. We know you've been longing to see friends, but the rules are clear: we need to limit our interactions with people outside our household.
9. It will be hard, but no hugs or handshakes! (If we share the peace it will have to be at a distance – you may remember the BSL version I taught you just before lockdown.)
10. The services will be shorter, around 40 minutes.
11. We will need to keep the doors open as far as we are able (to increase ventilation) so you will need to dress appropriately for the weather. (There may be a call for prayer shawls here!)

We do need volunteers to help make this happen over the longer term, so if you would be willing to be a steward, or to help in any other way, please let Judith Wilson know.

Although it means won't be what we are used to, it's important that we follow the guidance - to protect each other as well as ourselves. But it's also important to remember that we have discovered that being physically separated doesn't mean that we can't unite in worship - whether it is via 'Zoom' or socially distanced in the same room.

God bless,



Allan