

Covid-19 Update – Church Re-Opening Plans (Updated 17th September 2020)

It has been said often recently, “The church is not closed. The building may be closed for a time, but we’ve never been more open”. This remains true, but we understand how everyone will have missed meeting up physically for worship and fellowship over recent months and how we are all longing to get back to normal, even a “new normal”. We are looking forward to being able to welcome you back physically to Glasgow City Free Church, whenever you feel ready to do so. We re-opened on **Sunday 6th September**, and have put plans in place to allow this to happen safely and cautiously, but you need to be aware of the following information.

- The primary format for worship continues to be on Zoom, and this facility will continue into the future. However, we understand that there may be some of you who are particularly keen to attend Church physically.
- All the below information is taken from the Free Church of Scotland in conjunction with the Scottish Government, as well as our own informed judgement and common sense principles based on the limitations within our building.
- From 15th July, Churches are allowed to re-open for physical congregational worship, subject to physical distancing and hygiene standards.
- Current Government guidance is that a maximum of 50 people at any one time are permitted to attend, regardless of building size or usual capacity.
- You must **not** attend if you even suspect you have any symptoms of Covid-19 (i.e. a new or continuous cough, a fever, or a change in taste or smell), or if you have been in recent close contact with anyone who has displayed symptoms.
- The Kirk Session is very concerned about the welfare of all, and therefore strongly encourage those in vulnerable categories (i.e. those over 70, or who have an underlying health condition such as asthma or diabetes) to continue worshipping with us on Zoom. This position will be reviewed during October.
- There will be no Crèche, Sunday School or Bible Class at the moment but this will be kept under review.
- No refreshments or extended fellowship time will be allowed.
- Both morning and evening services will be held in the Sanctuary with specific entrance/exiting policies, one way systems etc, and a cleaning team to wipe down surfaces between the two services.
- Limited toilet facilities will be available and we will provide cleaning materials which you will be expected to use before and after you use these facilities.

- No singing will be permitted. Reciting of the Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed is allowed, but should be with your normal speaking voice, while wearing a face covering.
- Hand shaking or hugging out with your own household will not be allowed.
- Face coverings are now mandatory for all places of worship. 2-metre social distancing restrictions will also be in place.
- No area of the building will be accessible other than the vestibule and Sanctuary.
- Attendance will be at your own risk, but we will do everything we can to mitigate that risk.

Before we re-opened:

- A Covid-19 Risk Assessment was carried out by our Facilities Manager.
- Surfaces which anyone may have touched in the days leading up to re-opening were thoroughly cleaned.
- Floor markings to indicate 2-metre distance were put in place, along with a 1-way system around the Sanctuary.
- Signs indicating where you can sit will be put in place.
- Sanitising stations were put in place.
- A booking system was put in place, and must be adhered to by all wishing to attend (this will be advertised for any visitors on the website and social media).

What you need to know before you arrive:

- You must pre-book a space to attend.
- Where possible, stagger arrival time to avoid unnecessary queuing, but please try not to arrive more than 20 minutes before the service start time. Please also try not to arrive late so that everyone can be safely seated before the service starts.
- You may need to queue outside to gain entry if too many arrive at once.
- If we reach maximum numbers allowed, you may need to be prepared to give up your place in the building (perhaps returning to your car to access the service via Zoom) in the event of any visitors turning up. This being a preferable option to turning visitors away.
- Parking charges have now resumed for on-street parking in the City Centre (following a period of no charging) but we have 50% off charges at the Waterloo Street Q-Park.
- Office Bearers in attendance should be prepared to take a turn at opening the door, "manning" the vestibule to ensure that everyone arriving has pre-booked their place with Laura, or provides details if they are visiting (only if there is room) sanitises their hands and follows the 1-way system. Cleaning of surfaces, door handles, light switches etc will need to be done before locking up the building. We may also ask regular attenders to attend to these duties.

- Laura will maintain a register of those who attend each week for Test and Protect purposes. These details will be kept for 21 days. If you test positive for Covid-19 after attending church, you have a responsibility to advise NHS Contact Tracers that you have attended church.
- Everyone who attends must be aware that they may be required to self-isolate for 14 days if you are notified that one of the other attendees subsequently tests positive for Covid-19. This is in line with the NHS Test and Protect and Contact Tracing procedures.

As you arrive:

- Only 1 set of doors will be open as you arrive.
- Doors will be kept open so that you do not need to touch handles, and also to allow as much ventilation as possible.
- You must sanitise your hands as you enter (sanitising stations will be available).
- Pews that are available for use will be numbered, and you must sit in the pew you are allocated to when your booking is confirmed by Laura. You need to be aware that your allocated seat may not be in your preferred area of the church. Cushions will be rotated after each service to allow sufficient time for surfaces to air between uses.

Practicalities during the service:

- Colin, or whoever is preaching, will be more than 2 metres away from the nearest worshippers.
- No pew Bibles will be available, but the readings will be displayed on the screens or you can bring your own Bible. They will also be available on the website.
- No paper orders of service will be available, but will continue to be e-mailed out so that you can access on your phone or device, and will be available on the website.
- There are screens displaying the psalm/hymn words and are available on the website. Sing Psalms is also available as an Android or iOS App.
- No singing will be permitted. You will be able to hear the psalms/hymns, but you will not be able to sing along to them.
- No offering will be uplifted. Please continue to use electronic methods of donating.

After the service:

- You should ensure that you take all your belongings and any rubbish with you.
- You should leave the building in an orderly fashion and without unnecessary delay and avoid congestion in the vestibule area.
- You must sanitise your hands as you leave the building
- You must exit by the opposite set of doors from which you entered.
- Please do not gather in groups outside the building.