

Update on transitioning out of lockdown 7

9 May 2021

What is the key change?

- The 50-cap for services has been removed.
- Numbers able to attend services will now be determined by physical distancing (currently 2m).
- This will increase our capacity.

What will this mean for Sundays?

- From next **Sunday, 16 May**, everyone will be able to attend church in person weekly (one service).
- There will be four services: **9.00am, 11.00am, 4.30pm and 6.30pm**.
- Creche, Little Stars and Sparklers will be at the 9.00am service every week.
- Sunday Club and Youth Church will be at the 11.00am service every week. There will be no creche at the 11.00am service.
- CCY will meet weekly during the 4.30pm service, then attend the 6.30pm service.
- From next Sunday, 16 May, there will be no children and youth groups meeting on Zoom.
- The 4.30 service will be lower in number compared to the other services.
- Sunday prayer meetings will be at 8.30am and 5.30pm, continuing on Zoom.
- The 11.00am and 6.30pm services will be live-streamed on Zoom and YouTube.
- Zoom break-out rooms will follow the 11.00am and 6.30pm services.

There are some significant changes here.

- ❖ Everyone will be able to attend a service weekly. This is very welcome. The last time we were able to attend church in person every week was March 2020.
- ❖ The reason we have to split children and youth groups between two services is due to numbers. While the capacity at services has increased, not to the extent that we can accommodate all children and youth work at the same service.
- ❖ The change in service times, from 9:30am to 9:00am, and from 11:30am to 11:00am, is in recognition that 11:30am is late for families to make work.
- ❖ We recognise this will bring challenges, but getting people back to church in person weekly is the most important thing.

What is unchanged on Sundays?

- The 2m physical distancing still applies.
- Strict protocols on cleaning / hygiene still apply.
- Face masks remain a legal requirement and singing is not yet permitted.
- Keeping details of those attending services for track and trace is still required. All data is kept strictly confidential.
- Segregation of different parts of the building for children and youth groups will continue for now.

There are some things we're still thinking through, like how we manage the time in the garden afterwards. We recognise this is a very important and valuable time. Speaking to one another afterwards is a core part of our gatherings on Sunday, whether in person or on Zoom.

All through the pandemic we have been scrupulous with health and hygiene protocols, including a weekly deep clean of the building and thorough cleaning after each service. Around 100 people are involved in cleaning. People are stewarded inside the building with flowlines to minimize any contact. The building is well ventilated. All this, coupled with facemask and social distancing (which are legal requirements), really does make church a safe environment.

Which service do I come to?

- If you are already back at church in person, you will be contacted by email on **Tuesday 11 May** with a service time. For many people this will be the service they currently attend. Some people, however, will need to change the service they come to (principally because of the change in children and youth work).
- You'll appreciate this is complicated to get right, so we're asking everyone to be as flexible as possible. If, however, there is a reason you can't come to the service you're allocated, then please get in touch with Naomi.

If I'm serving in children or youth work, can I come to another service on the same day?

- Yes

What should I do if I'm away on a particular Sunday?

- It will be a huge help if you can tell us beforehand, if at all possible by the Thursday before the Sunday.
- Numbers are tight and it will be a real help to know if there are spaces. Once restrictions are eased further, it won't matter as much.

Can I invite / bring people to church?

- **Yes, please do.** There will be space for people. Get in touch with Naomi.

What happens if I'm not yet signed up to return in person?

- When you feel ready to return to church in person, please contact Naomi. She will discuss with you the best service to come to.

What about midweek activities?

- **Cord and Focus** have resumed on site.
- **House Group** continue on Zoom, though future expected changes in household rules may make it possible to meet in person.
- **Baby & Toddlers** will begin on Tuesday 18 May.
- **Walking Group** has recommenced.
- **Impact** will resume in the building on Friday 21 May (alternative arrangements before then).
- **MAP and MIT in person teaching / training** will resume in the building after 17 May.

How can I help?

- From 16 May, **6 more cleaners** will be required. Please contact Naomi if you are able to help. Close to 100 people are involved, doing a little bit each, sharing the load and serving the church family.

What further changes in regulations do we anticipate?

- Mainland Scotland is currently at Level 3.
- Moving down the levels, which we anticipate over the next two months, will not significantly impact what we're able to do on Sundays. For churches, levels 3, 2, 1 and 0 are virtually identical.
- That said, regulations can change. It may be that singing will be permitted. And if physical distancing requirement is reduced, that will have a significant impact, for example enabling us to have children and youth programmes at the same service.

When will things get back to normal?

- We don't know the answer to that. We pray that things will progress positively over the summer and into the autumn.
- But we're not back to normal yet.
- We're not back to normal because there are lots of things we still can't do. But we value so much what we can do.
- We're not back to normal because a number of us are not yet back to church in person. Our church family remains scattered. Those who are shielding, vulnerable or wary, will be able to return after they are vaccinated. Others will be able to return when they return to Edinburgh for work. Some will never be able to return because they are too frail and infirm.

Selflessly look to the interests of others

- The easing of lockdown is not simple. The process of coming back together in person as a church family will take time, listening, love and patience. Chalmers is made up of 350 individuals. Everyone has different needs / different circumstances.
- While we welcome the chance to come to church every week again, for some it will be more difficult. For example, families with children at both the 9am and 11am services, Sunday Club and Youth Church teachers teaching at a later service, musicians who will have a very early start, and those of us who will need to change to a service time that is perhaps less convenient.
- Careful planning and communication will be important. Please pray for Naomi and others involved. Most important of all, is the unifying power of God's Word, preached on Sundays, studied in small groups and taught to the children. The Word of God at work in us creates humility, so that each of us looks not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:1-11).

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Robin on behalf of the Elders
9 May 2021