

Dated

9th June 2020

Lifting of Restrictions

A guide to what you might expect at Church as restrictions are lifted

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Introduction

The Government has published [guidelines](#) and a Frequently Asked Questions [document](#) to provide information on the roadmap for how and when the UK will adjust its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with the Government's 3 steps, it is hoped that by 4th July public places, with places of worship explicitly referenced, will be allowed to re-open in some form. **This does not mean** things will automatically return to pre-COVID-19 arrangements and in order for premises to be used in any form they will need to meet the COVID-19 secure guidelines.

Coronavirus restrictions and social distancing are inevitably going to be part of our life for many months to come until an effective vaccine is developed and deployed to the majority of the population (if that proves to be possible at all). The most vulnerable, including those over the age of 70, are likely to be the last to be able to fully reintegrate into society. Given the demographic of our church this means that our common life together is not likely to get to a recognisable "normal" for some time still.

This document aims to set out the guidelines the leadership team have considered that need to be in place for us to re-open and operate safely as a Church within these COVID-19 secure guidelines.

Fundamentally, to ensure we adhere to these safe and secure guidelines, we need to keep a tight control the number of people within our building at any one time and we ask that church members and visitors adhere to these guidelines in order to keep one another safe.

Hygiene

Currently [Government](#) and [NHS](#) advice is that individuals should always follow good hygiene practices including:

- carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, and binning the tissue;
- **washing hands with soap and water (for 20 seconds)** or using alcohol based sanitiser gel to kill germs if washing is not possible.
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- if you feel unwell, stay at home.
- cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Signage in the building has been updated, including COVID-19 hygiene posters, handwashing advice and entrance notices that ask people with symptoms not to enter. Hand sanitiser has been made available in reception, welcome area, Oasis and No.4 areas.

Will the Church Office/Reception be open?

The church office will open from **6th July 2020** to answer telephone and face to face enquiries. In order to comply with safe distancing regulations, the office computer will be moved to the rear of the office, so that the telephone and visitors can be handled separately. This area is restricted to staff and volunteers only and we will limit this to 3 people at any one time in order to maintain social distancing requirements. A screen will be in place to protect our staff at all times. Hand sanitiser will be made available and we will continue to encourage visitors to follow good hygiene practices as detailed above.

What about access to our Church building?

Similar to how we operate during FM week, the church doors to Connaught Avenue will remain locked at all times and access will be granted via the buzzer system only. The front and rear door codes will be changed and the numbers will not be issued as usual, but will be shared with staff, volunteers and out of hour's group leaders. It is imperative that we know who is on our premises at all times in order to keep one another safe and therefore we ask that you comply with these measures & that you sign in/out at all times.

Access to the machine room will be allowed, but we ask that this is limited to one person at a time, in order to maintain social distancing requirements.

In order to maintain social distancing requirements, we will need to limit access to the toilets by Oasis to one person at a time from groups that book our rooms and therefore these will not be open to members of the general public.

We furloughed our cleaners (Sue & Ann) for several weeks, but on their return we will be adopting a more focused approach to cleaning that follow [government guidance](#), rather than keeping to our broader cleaning rota. We will encourage groups to use plastic rather than fabric chairs and these, together with other surfaces, will be deep cleaned each day and after each group. We will encourage individual groups to consider use of their rooms and ask them to carry out any additional cleaning as necessary to help us in keeping these areas safe.

Will Oasis Café be open?

Oasis Café will remain closed as a café until further notice for reasons outlined below. It's important that when we do open again as a café, we can operate safely and offer consistent hours. Unlike other café's, Oasis café encourages guests to stay awhile and chat, get to know one another and its model it that of a community hub rather than offering a take away service or single seating areas. We closed Oasis from 16th March 2020, largely because a lot of the volunteers and people they come into contact with are in the vulnerable category. This was considered high risk. This situation remains the same and due to the additional limitations that would need to be imposed, such as a table/seating plan that complies with social distancing requirements, a control over the number of people entering the premises, the availability of volunteers who themselves may be isolating or needing to self-isolate for other reasons, coupled with the additional measures that would need to be implemented, such as deep cleaning, control over use of shared areas and equipment, Oasis Café will remain closed.

We will, however, be opening Oasis as a room that can be used for small groups where the numbers are controlled and measures can be easily put in place. There will be additional signs to indicate the room is not open as a café. Please refer to guidelines for room bookings and risk assessments below.

Can my Connect Group meet?

When government guidelines allow, we will encourage Connect Groups to recommence in their homes as before.

Can our Connect Group meet at Church instead of someone's home?

Connect Group leaders will be able to book a room in church for them to meet, if they feel unable to accommodate their group at home as usual. This will be subject to availability. We will also ask Connect Group leaders who do continue to meet at home, to consider meeting on a Sunday morning to come together to watch our service online.

What about other room bookings?

Small groups of people, who wish to meet at church, will be allowed to book a room for them to meet together from **6th July 2020**. The size of the group is subject to regulations. Availability will be limited and we will ask groups to complete a risk assessment at the time they book. Please see risk assessments below.

What about our Sunday Services?

With regret, the Elders/Trustees have decided there will not be any formal church services until September (at the earliest), for the reasons outlined below.

- **We are called to love our community:** Right now, the most loving and generous thing we can do is to protect those most vulnerable to COVID-19 and help stop any further spikes in the pandemic. At the start of 2020, God called us to be an open-handed Church and means choosing to put the needs of our community above our own, even when we desperately want to return to meeting together. Whilst one of our values is risk taking, we do not want to take unnecessary risks.
- **Our Sunday Online service is working:** Whilst we would prefer to physically stand together, sing together and take communion together, we can still come together to worship, sing and share communion safely from our own homes. In some countries where restrictions have begun to lift, churches are meeting together without singing, communion or close physical contact. It seems, at this stage, that our online services actually allow us more freedom. To date, our YouTube channel has attracted over 41,000 views with 9,300 unique viewers. Our passion is to make every moment count to see lives transformed by Jesus and we can be thankful we have not been hindered in doing that!
- **Limits to Social Distancing/cleaning:** Our building holds 300+ but social distancing rules would limit us to a max of 50 people, seated downstairs. The balcony area can only be accessed by a single narrow staircase and therefore may prove difficult to open and maintain social distancing guidelines. It would be very difficult to hold Sunday services, limited to 50 at a time, and maintain our reputation for being a welcoming church! This is in addition to the cleaning requirements we would need to impose, especially on soft furnishings and other surfaces, between *every* service, in order to operate safely.

- **Urgent building works:** Whilst we have been apart, we have discovered a serious damp issue with the sanctuary floor. As a result, the carpet has been taken up and the floor boards removed. This will be replaced in June/July and we are also seizing this opportunity to redecorate the sanctuary too.

What about Prayer meetings?

With the Sanctuary out of action for some time, prayer meetings with adequate social distance measures in place can resume in Oasis, the welcome area or the large hall. We will also continue to make use of Zoom for our wider corporate prayer events.

What about Children's groups?

Freekidz are currently running some groups online with others operating with material from our website.

If you recall, soon after restrictions were imposed, on 16th March 2020 we took the decision to close JellyTotz because a lot of the volunteers were in the vulnerable category. This remains the case and together with the additional cleaning requirements we would need to impose, especially with soft toys and furnishings, JellyTotz will remain closed for the time being. Sunday Freekidz groups will not run whilst we do not have any formal Sunday services. The mid-week *Links* group will continue online and will potentially resume in the church with social distancing measures in place.

What about Youth groups?

FreeYouth are currently running several meetings online during the week and some of these will continue where needed.

Unlike the children's groups, the majority of the FreeYouth leaders are not classed as vulnerable so we anticipate that our Youth groups can resume as soon as they feel ready to do so with social distancing measures in place. However, due to the unpredictability in numbers and free movement around the building, *Streams* Youth Club will not be opening until further notice. This group would be very difficult to apply social distance measures and ensure all equipment is sterilized after use. Sunday groups will not run whilst we do not have any formal Sunday services.

What about Senior's groups?

Together with Oasis and JellyTotz, on 16th March 2020 we took the decision to close Welcome break as all the guests and volunteers alike are in the vulnerable category. This remains to be the case and so Welcome Break will remain closed for the time being. When it does look to resume we will need to assess what changes we need to make to how we operate safely as a group.

Will our TLG Education Centre be reopening?

Our TLG Centre closed just before lockdown and the staff team have been supporting the students online and with phone calls. It is hoped that the centre will reopen on the 15th June, with restricted student numbers and following guidance from the government and TLG. The centre will also be following our own guidelines outlined in this document.

Will the church be opening for private prayer from 15th June?

The government has suggested that churches can open from 15th June to allow individuals to pray. We will not be opening for this, but instead wait until the 6th July when we will hopefully be offering individuals to pray with a minister or elder, one to one. Waiting until the 6th July allows us enough time to put in place all the necessary precautions associated with opening our buildings, as detailed in our risk assessment.

Communication

We will continue to keep our church family informed via email and letter and update our website with the latest developments and will continue to review government and BU guidelines and our response to it. We will put signs up around the church to remind visitors and groups alike of the new requirements.

Risk Assessments

In order to ensure each group has considered what thought, care and attention is needed to operate their group safely, we will ask each group leader to complete a risk assessment. A sample risk assessment is included below for reference.

Assessment Area or Group:	Church Office/Reception	Name of Assessor:	Mark Betteridge	Date:	1 st June 2020
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing? (Control measures)	What further action is necessary? (Who & When)	Date completed	
Direct and indirect infection transmission while on Church premises	Visitors, volunteers and staff could contract COVID-19. <i>The illness is most likely to be mild, but a small %age experiences a severe illness and for some it can be fatal.</i>	<p>Currently Government and NHS advice is that individuals should always follow good hygiene practices including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, and binning the tissue;• washing hands with soap and water (for 20 seconds) or using alcohol based sanitiser gel to kill germs.• avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.• if you feel unwell, stay at home.• cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces <p>Signage to this effect has been installed next to all sinks and in all toilets.</p> <p>Hand sanitiser has been made available in reception, welcome lounge, Oasis and No.4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconfigure the room(s) being used to facilitate social distancing where possible, including spacing tables and seating 2m apart and marking out 2m spaces on the floor where visitors, volunteers and staff are likely to gather (e.g. at Reception).• Remove unnecessary items and soft furnishings from room(s) where possible, switching to use of plastic furniture to make cleaning and sanitising easier.• Update signage in the building including COVID-19 hygiene posters, handwashing advice and entrance notices that ask people with symptoms not to enter.• Re-establish cleaning routines that follow government guidance, ensuring surfaces that are regularly touched are cleaned more often and bins are regularly emptied.• Consider whether any activities can take place outside where appropriate or consider how you can ventilate rooms by opening windows and doors.• One way system to be implemented, access via Connaught Avenue and exit via the rear door	<p>Office-PC to be moved to the rear of the office by 30th June.</p> <p>Office area to be limited to 3 staff and volunteers by 30th June</p> <p>Reception area by office screen to be marked out with tape by 30th June</p> <p>Protective screen to be implemented at the window hatch by 30th June</p> <p>Soft chairs in reception to be replaced with plastic chairs by 30th June.</p> <p>Machine room to be limited to 1 staff or volunteer at any one time by 30th June.</p> <p>Cleaners to be given new instructions to deep clean certain areas, each day by 30th June.</p> <p>Signage/arrows to be implemented by 30th June</p>	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing? (Control measures)	What further action is necessary? (Who & When)	Date completed
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connaught Avenue entrance to remain locked to control access to the building. Groups will need to use the intercom to gain access Toilets will not be open to members of the public Plan groups and timetabling to avoid people mixing in large or inconsistent groups. Where equipment is shared, ensure cleaning takes place between users. Plan safe travel arrangements and communicate to drivers drop-off and pick-up protocols that minimise adult to adult contact. Re-establish regular handwashing and good hygiene routines with students and staff. Ensure there are good supplies of tissues, hand soap or sanitiser and household cleaning products. 	<p>Front and Rear door code to be changed by 30th June and shared with staff and out of hour's group leaders only.</p> <p>All room bookings to be overseen by Mark Betteridge to ensure there is no overlap and to allow for any cleaning required</p> <p>Anti-bacterial wipes to be made available and volunteers and staff to be advised to use them by 30th June.</p> <p>Telephone, keyboard & mice to be wiped regularly.</p>
Visitors, volunteers or staff becomes infected at Church and passes it onto a shielded person they live with	Household members could become very ill or die from COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If any visitor, volunteer or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, it is advised they only attend Church if stringent social distancing can be adhered to. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we ask those individuals to not attend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that anyone who is unable to join for these reasons are supported by and remain in contact with the group leader in the first instance or with the Pastoral care system if appropriate. Offer follow up via email or post. 	Responsibility of group leader, to be implemented when they meet.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing? (Control measures)	What further action is necessary? (Who & When)	Date completed
Visitors, volunteers or staff becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature while at Church	Other visitors, volunteers or staff could become infected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If anyone becomes unwell, they must be sent home and advised to follow the COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance. • While awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people. • If possible a separate bathroom should be used if needed. This should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else. • PPE should be worn by the volunteer or staff member caring for this person while they await collection, particularly if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. • The volunteer or staff member should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. • Cleaning the affected area with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the following PPE is available (only to be used by volunteer / staff member for a person with coronavirus symptoms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fluid-resistant surgical face mask ○ Disposable gloves ○ Disposable aprons 	<p>Equipment to be ordered by Mark Betteridge by 30th June.</p> <p>Monitoring of PPE stock levels to be put in place by 30th June.</p>