

30th June 2020

Gathering together again for Worship

Dear friends

I am pleased and excited to learn that we are beginning to see real progress in reducing the restrictions imposed on us because of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Since March we have been prevented from meeting together for worship. Each Sunday morning I think of you and being able to welcome you again. I know that many of you share the pain that we cannot meet and look forward to the day we will. As Christian brothers and sisters we long to be together and our Kirk Session and I and are taking every possible to enable this to happen safely.

On Thursday 19th June our local Government announced that Churches can open for worship from Monday 29th June. At that same time advice and directions, including an 11 page document and 27 point 'Check List', were issued by PCI to ensure we provide a safe way for us to gather again. Since then members of our Kirk Session have been working hard to understand what this means and what measures we will have to take to make our Church building safe for use. Measurements have been taken and plans drawn up. Our Kirk Session met last night, Monday 29th, to discuss and decide what we should do. We prayerfully considered every aspect involved and have approved plans which were drawn up to allow us to use the Church again. We are very conscious of the notes of caution that have been sounded and the risks that we all face. The safety of all our members is of the utmost importance to us and we note the very significant concerns expressed by medical professionals that **the virus has not gone away** and a second wave is still possible!

After careful discussion and consideration of all aspects of the situation our Kirk Session decided that worship can recommence in our Church on **Sunday 12th July**.

We also recognise that worship in our building will be very different from what we are used to – The following steps must be in place

1. One doorway will be used for entry and exit.
2. Only every-other Pew may be used.
3. Elders will act as stewards to show members to the next available seat , filling the available pews from the front of the Church to the rear.
4. All ministers are required to remain 4m distant from the congregation whilst conducting the service.
5. There will be no tea or coffee served.
6. There will be music but singing is to be avoided as this is a high-risk activity as it projects particles much more than speech,
7. Only one Toilet will be available and must be sanitised after use.
8. At the end of the service people will be asked to leave one section at a time starting with the rear pew in that section.
9. No one should shake hands to greet or say farewell and close contact is to be discouraged.

ROSEMARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

10. No Offering will be lifted but these may be deposited in a box provided.
11. All hymn books and bibles have been removed from the pews, and members may bring their own bible if they wish.
12. No Orders of Service will be distributed.

We note that the recommendation last week did not consider PPE to be necessary however we also recognise that Face covering will reduce risk and people are very welcome to choose to wear such protection as they deem appropriate and must not feel inhibited in doing this.

This is enormously different from what we are familiar with or expect when we come to church but these actions are for your safety. When we come to Church we want to join together in the fellowship and joy of worshipping God together. We look forward to meeting and chatting with old and new friends and spending time together – This experience is sadly still far off! –

We recognise that there are those members who should NOT COME.

This includes anyone with Symptoms of Covid 19 or living with anyone with Symptoms, As well as those living In a household with anyone isolating as a contact (contact tracing) or isolating after travel. Shielding persons also should not come - official letters in NI are up to 31st July.

We are also aware of the fact that some of our members have told us that they do not feel safe about being in a group regardless of the precautions that are in place and many of us have particular concerns because of existing health conditions.

We believe it is very important that every member should have the opportunity to worship even if this is by remote means using recordings and the Internet so an appropriate system will be developed which records the service in our Church each Sunday morning and then makes it available via the internet thus allowing members and visitors to take part from the safety and comfort of their own homes. We plan to distribute other material to be used in the safety of your home and want to develop more opportunities to meet online using such platforms as Zoom. We note that other congregations are meeting weekly for Prayer, Fellowship, chat and Bible Study using Zoom or similar platforms and we want to consider using this in the future.

We believe this is good news, and a big step in the right direction. We trust in the Almighty God and seek to act wisely and in the best interests of everyone and look forward to seeing you very soon.

Yours in fellowship

Clerk of Session