

Transitioning out of lockdown Update 5 (21 March 2021)

Lockdown began on 23 March 2020, almost a year ago.

We are thankful to God for sustaining us through the last twelve months and for the sacrificial love, care and service of the church family.

As Elders we have always been committed to the importance of the church family meeting together in person on Sundays. Meeting together in person is what a local church is – an in-person gathering. This is what the Bible tells us to do. It is important for our spiritual growth and for those we gather with.

For two lengthy periods – the end of March to the end of July 2020, and from the beginning of January this year until now, we have been unable to meet in person on Sundays.

The government has announced that churches are able to open again from 26 March, with a maximum of 50 people attending.

We thank God for this significant step forward and pray that it will be the start of a phased return to normality.

Chalmers will resume in-person services on Sunday 28 March.

While this is very welcome, there are a number of restrictions:

Social distancing, face coverings and other mitigations still apply like cleaning seats and toilets after each service and a deep clean outside of Sundays. It is important we all remain vigilant and comply with these measures.

Between 26 March and 26 April, Level 4 travel restrictions still apply. This means it will not be permissible to travel across Local Authority boundaries to attend church until 26 April, when the Scotland-wide travel restriction is lifted.

No indoor children's work or youth work other than formal education in school is permitted, which means that children and youth programmes will continue, for now, on Zoom.

With the exception of Easter Sunday, we will not be restarting the 9.30 service until children and youth work can be on-site, hopefully by the end of April. Families are of course welcome to come to church, but children, including infants, will need to sit with their parents throughout the service.

For the Easter period, up to and including Sunday 4 April (Easter Sunday), services will be as follows:

Sunday 28 March (Palm Sunday)

11.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube
4.30
6.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube

Children and youth groups on Zoom
Prayer meetings 11.00 and 5.30 on Zoom

Friday 2 April (Good Friday)

4.30
6.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube
There will be no communion on Good Friday. Communion will be on 11 and 18 April at all services.

Sunday 4 April (Easter Sunday)

9.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube
11.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube
4.30
6.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube

Children and youth groups on Zoom
Prayer meetings at 9.00 and 5.30 on Zoom

The 9.30 service on Easter Sunday is to enable as many people as possible to come to church in person.

Sign up for services over the Easter period (28 March, 2 April, 4 April) via the website.

Please can you sign up as soon as possible. That will be a big help.

To manage numbers, can we encourage you to sign up for one or two services over these dates (28 March, 2 April, 4 April) and only for one service a day. To that end, please be inviting guests to come to the Easter services.

From Sunday 11 April we will return to the pre-Christmas pattern of people attending on alternate Sundays:

11.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube
4.30
6.30 Also streamed on Zoom and YouTube

Children and youth groups on Zoom
Prayer meetings 11.00 and 5.30 on Zoom

The 9.30 service will restart in person as soon as children and youth work can be on-site.

If you were attending services in person before Christmas, can we ask that you stick to the same time. Naomi Wright will be in touch with you in the next week or so to confirm your service time and starting date.

If you are planning to return to in-person services for the first time, please contact Naomi Wright who will allocate you to a service.

Cord / Focus will be able to return to meeting on-site from 6 April.

No other activities can resume on-site at this stage.

We will keep you up to date with any changes. This slot on a Sunday evening will be when we do that, with a follow-up email.

All that I have said tonight will be sent to you in an email later this evening. The update will also be posted on the website.

As we come to what we pray is the end of lockdown and a phased return to normality, can I sound a note of caution. Many will be excited. Some will be worn out. Even the changes I have set out this evening will be received by people in different ways. The fact that we are not able yet to have children and youth work on site is disappointing for families and for teachers. We pray that will happen very soon. Please pray for families. Please pray for the leaders of children and youth work. We thank God for them. Please remember those outside the local authority area who will not be able to travel to church until travel restrictions are lifted. That will be hard. And please pray for those who may be tentative about returning to church in person. We are a church family. We love one another. We bear with one another. And, most importantly, we have a Good Shepherd in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our trust is in Him alone.

Let me lead us in a short prayer.

Our Father, thank you for sustaining us over the past year. We pray this will be the start of the return to normality. We commit all our plans and everyone in the church family to your loving counsel and care. This Easter, we pray that many people will come to believe in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord as we proclaim His death and resurrection. For Jesus' sake, Amen.

The Elders
21 March 2021