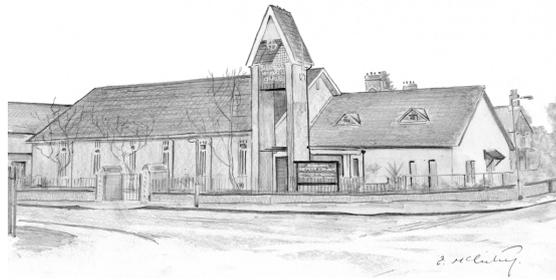


Sydenham Methodist Church

www.sydenhammethodist.org



8 September 2020

Dear Friends,

As we begin to emerge from lockdown, it is time to re-open the church building for public worship. We are grateful for the information and the direction given by the Methodist Church in Ireland leadership, as well as from the Government. In these times, church will not look nor feel how it has been in the past. I'm afraid that this will be inevitable as we adjust to the ongoing restrictions.

Our first Sunday back is scheduled to be **Sunday 27th September 2020 at 11am**. As we have put up a camera in the church, the services will be recorded and available to view on our church website from Sunday afternoon each week. There will be no evening services for the time being.

There are several things to note as we gather again. First of all, even though the church is open for public worship, you should not feel obliged to attend. Many of you will still be anxious or you may need to keep shielding for the sake of yourself and/or loved ones. Needless to say, if you have any Covid-19 symptoms or are feeling ill in any way, you should not attend.

Social Distancing – When entering or leaving the church please maintain the 2-metre social distancing. Tape markings on the ground will provide guidelines.

Cleaning – The church will be cleaned in advance of any services.

Hand sanitizer – This will be available as you enter the building.

Seating arrangements - With social distancing guidelines, our capacity is restricted, and we are limited to about 30 units. One unit could be a single person, or a family. At all times, people outside their 'bubble' will need to be 2 metres apart from others. To give us an indication of numbers likely to attend, please contact **Ruth Boyce on (028) 90481152 or email her ruthboyce@talktalk.net**

On arrival - A **steward** will show you to a pew. It is highly unlikely to be in the pew in which you normally sit! Cushions have had to be removed, so you are welcome to bring your own cushion and take it away with you again.

Face Coverings – As per the guidelines, face coverings are now mandatory, unless you have a medical condition. If you forget to bring a face covering, one will be provided for you.

Contact Tracing Form – You must complete a short form (postcard size) so please bring a pen if you can remember. If you forget there will be pens available.

Toilets - Toilets will be available for use.

Families – With the restrictions, children must remain with their parents or guardians during the entire service. Of course, going to the toilets is permitted but we're not allowed to have children moving around the church building. In the meantime, KidZone will continue online, and going forward we will look at how we can safely and creatively integrate our children and young people into our worship services.

Worship – The service itself will be different to what we've been used to. As Methodists, we 'sing our faith' and there has been much talk about not being permitted to sing in church. The guidelines do now open up the possibility of singing quietly while still wearing a mask. We will still have music - from a member of the Praise group, or through the organ being played or through songs on Powerpoint. The service will need to be shorter than usual so I will aim for 45 minutes.

Ventilation – The church building will need to be ventilated during worship, so whilst the heat will be on, please appreciate that there may be draughts.

Fellowship – Sadly, we'll not be able to have our tea/coffee after church, and nor will we be able to chat with each other like we're used to. At the end of worship, stewards will invite you to leave your pew in order that there isn't a bottleneck at the doors. And I'll not be able greet you in the conventional way when you leave.

Offering – Thank you for your faithfulness in your giving, especially during lockdown. We won't pass round a basket for the offering during worship, but rather there will be baskets in which to present your offering as you leave church. It has been good to see that more people are giving by Standing Order. Once again, I encourage as many of you as possible to give your offering this way.

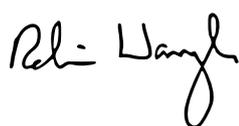
Other Church Activities – The re-opening dates of our various church activities will be communicated in due course and will be available on our church website.

Obviously, none of this is ideal, but this is all about trying to make the best of a bad situation. I know that you will appreciate that all these protocols are in place for your safety. Whilst I've given information that is correct at the time of writing, circumstances may change and develop. I will have any updated information on the church website, so please check that regularly www.sydenhammethodist.org

As we continue to live in this Covid-19 world, we hold on to our faith that the Lord is in the midst of all this and is still at work in our church family and community. Our prayer is that this will only be for a relatively short season, so we pray for those medical scientists and researchers looking to create a vaccine and treatment. Regardless of how long these restrictions apply, our confidence is in the Lord's faithfulness and goodness.

If you have any queries at all, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours in Christ,



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