

*We want to see  
North Walthamstow  
transformed by Jesus,  
one life at a time*



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“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.” Philippians 1v9-11

Dear Friends,

**The Government have announced that returning to Church services is now *possible*.**

We fully understand that many will not want to return to meeting together in person for some time. Indeed, for some time, we will not all be able to return to meeting together in person straight away because our building capacity is limited for safety to ensure social distancing.

Please can we ask you to read the information below, which we hope gives you the information you need about attending services at Saint John’s Church Building?

**Sunday services will continue to take place at 10am on Zoom / Facebook Live / in person at Saint John’s.**

**However, if you are meeting in person, please could we ask you to arrive by 9.45am to ensure everyone is able to enter the building safely before 10.00am.**

**And, to ensure we do not need to turn people away, please can you RSVP to let us know in advance if you plan to attend this Sunday?**

Our aim is that we continue to meet together as one Church Family, but now with some of us meeting together physically and others meeting together digitally via [Zoom](#).

We will be testing this Friday to see whether we can livestream out from the Saint John’s Church building. If not, we will be livestreaming from the vicarage etc into the Church building and those attending our building will watch and join in our livestream services together.

The government advice about opening churches is [here](#), and we have completed a full risk assessment.

**Will we be able to sing?**

No, and I know this is disappointing for many. We are also being asked to pray and say the responses quietly. However, we can still listen to music!

**Will we be celebrating the Lord’s Supper?**

Not yet. Once we are confident about the return to church, we will resume celebrating the Lord’s Supper. We are sure we will learn much in the early weeks, but we also need to be patient.

**Can I sit wherever I want?**

No. We have had to work out a new seating capacity for each room / group that complies with social distancing, and we won’t be able to use all of the seats. Seating will be clearly marked and you might be asked to sit in a specific place.

### **Will I get a service sheet?**

The service will be streamed through the projector. But a few service sheets will be available on the chairs. These will include song lyrics, prayer responses and the Bible passage.

### **How many people can come?**

Our risk assessment has identified that a maximum of 45 people (of all ages) can attend upstairs, and up to 30 Children can attend Messy Church in 2 groups downstairs.

BUT, for Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July, we have decided to limit numbers to a maximum of 35 people upstairs and 15 Children downstairs.

**To ensure we do not need to turn people away, please can you RSVP to let us know in advance if you plan to attend this Sunday?**

### **What will happen when I arrive?**

- Everyone will need to wash hands before entering. It may be necessary to queue outside until washing spaces area available.
- To help with the Government Test and Trace policy, we will keep records of the names and contact details of all those who attend the Church for 21 days.
- Only 1 household can use the lift at any one time.
- Upstairs you will be asked to sit in household groups (or by yourself if you are the only member of your household attending) to ensure social distancing.

### **Will online services continue?**

Yes. We plan to continue online services via Zoom for the foreseeable future.

### **Can children come to church?**

Yes, children are always welcome but parents / carers will need to monitor them carefully. Messy Church will be available for Primary School age young people. Children attending Messy Church will remain downstairs the whole time and will not go upstairs unless they choose to remain with their parents throughout the service. In time, we hope an organised creche will be available too.

### **Can vulnerable groups come to church?**

The government have asked us to reiterate their advice to the over 70s, and to the clinically extremely vulnerable. You can find that advice [here](#). It is guidance not commands, but they have asked us to strongly discourage those who have been shielding from coming to Church. In line with this advice, we will only use volunteers from vulnerable groups if they can work separate from others.

### **Will the toilets be open?**

Yes. But, we can only have members of 1 household in each toilet area at any one time. We are seeking to follow the Church of England guidelines on cleaning them.

### **Will it be possible to give?**

Yes. A plate will be left at the back of church for people to put money into if you would like.

### **Will there be tea and coffee after the service?**

No. It will be some time before we can have refreshments after the service. The government have asked us to keep services as short as possible and for conversations to take place **outside** at 2 m distance, so turning around to talk to those behind you in church is discouraged.

### **Will I need to wear a face covering?**

No. You are most welcome to wear one but the advice is we are better maintaining 2m distance than relying on coverings. Please see the government advice [here](#).

### **Can I offer a friend a lift to church?**

The government advice is that we should not.

### **Will the church be clean?**

Yes, the Church of England has provided good cleaning advice and we are seeking to follow it carefully.

### **What if I have Covid19 or symptoms?**

**STAY AT HOME!!!** If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a place of worship they should go home immediately and be advised to follow the stay at home guidance which covers NHS Test and Trace. If they need clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111 (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. They should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

### **Where is God in all this?**

As I wrote before lockdown:

“Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.” (Hebrews 13v8).

For followers of Jesus, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in time of trouble.” (Psalm 46v1).

And, “nothing (not even coronavirus, nor even death) can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8v35-39).

**The Good news of Jesus remains true!** Jesus has died for our sins, He is risen, and this gives all believers the assurance of God's Fatherly care now (whatever the circumstances) and the certain hope of eternal life with Him in the future!

### **Jesus' great commission to His disciples remains in force:**

“Jesus came and said to His disciples and said ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’” (Matthew 28v18-20).

Friends, even in these troubled days, Jesus still has all authority. He is with us always. We can rely on no-one else.

**So, let me encourage you to keep on praying to God for those in authority, keep on praying Paul's prayer to the Philippians that we may all be able to discern what is best, and also for our Church vision to be fulfilled:**

**We long to see North Walthamstow transformed by Jesus, one life at a time.** So, let us remain committed to hearing God speak to us in the Bible and depending on Him in prayer and let us keep on... *learning* to follow our Lord Jesus together, *loving* Jesus, one another and everyone in North Walthamstow and beyond, *servicing* Jesus and people wholeheartedly, and *sharing* the good news of Jesus with everyone everywhere.

With love and prayers for you all in Christ,

Kieran

**Messy Church plan:**

**Messy Church will take place downstairs:** children attending Messy Church will remain downstairs and not go upstairs.

**Children will be required to bring their own equipment** (except for paper) i.e. **they will need to bring their own pens, pencils, colouring pencils, glue, scissors etc.** They will not be helping themselves to any equipment. Any being handed out will be done by adults. *(If families need help providing pens, pencils, colouring pencils, glue, scissors etc, please let us know asap and we will try to help).*

**Please ensure that any children who are unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms STAY AT HOME!!**

**On arrival, children will be supervised washing hands.**

**Children will have one particular individually named seat** (2m apart from one another)

**There will be no contact games, or singing.**

**Because of the regulations, we will need to be firm on discipline.** There will be one time out corner for children with challenging behaviour. **If behaviour does not improve, parents will be texted to pick up their child and will need to leave the building because the child will be unable to go upstairs.** We will warn children, but please prepare your children in advance about our high behaviour expectations, and that there must be no shared materials, no running, no shouting, and no leaving the room.

**During the last 10 minutes of Messy Church Children will be supervised washing their hands again.**

**As soon as the service is finished, parents must collect their children immediately and leave the building to chat.**

Any sweets will be given to parents directly at the end of the session, and must not be consumed in the building.