

Guidance for our return to church



Practical guidelines for our congregation

Iron Hall Evangelical Church

INTRODUCTION

We are delighted that the Northern Ireland Executive have announced that church services can now recommence, and we are looking forward to gathering for our morning service on Sunday 26th July 2020. At the same time, we fully appreciate that some will be unable, or are not yet ready to attend at this time and that is fully understood and respected.

As restrictions ease, we know that this will be an anxious time for many, as social interactions increase across society and we take note of the risk of local spikes and a potential second wave etc.

We have thoughtfully and prayerfully considered our return to church services in the new circumstances which we find ourselves.

Church will look and feel very different to what we have known and enjoyed in the past; however, we are meeting in new circumstances and your full understanding and co-operation are essential for things to function properly.

This document is designed to set out some practical guidelines which are in place to allow us to return to the church buildings. We hope it will make you feel safe and informed about what to expect if you are able to join us soon.

Who should not attend the service?

Please do not attend the service if you:

- Have a cough, temperature or feel unwell.
- Have been in contact with someone displaying the symptoms of COVID-19
- Have been advised to shield by a medical professional
- Are vulnerable due to your age

Arrival at the church building

- On arrival at the main church building, unless no-one else is waiting to enter, you will be directed to queue across the front of the building on Templemore Avenue. Please queue 2m apart, to comply with social distancing guidelines.
- For any meetings in the Activity Centre you should queue at the right side of the entrance and down Thorndyke Street against the side of the building.
- Both entrance doors will be opened, so there will be no need to touch them as you enter.
- The front doors of the buildings will be opened 30 minutes before the start of any service or meeting ie 11.00am on a Sunday morning and 7.30pm on a Thursday night. Access will not be available before this time except for

deacons, helpers and those involved in sound/recordings etc. Please arrive in good time to allow to ensure you are seated before the start of the service.

Entering the building

- On arrival please ensure 2m social distance from others at the door, and throughout the building.
- All deacons or helpers who greet you or direct you through the building will be wearing face shields. This is for your safety.
- Hand sanitiser will be sprayed on your hands when you enter the building. This is compulsory for everyone attending our services. It is to protect you and to protect others.
- The wearing of face coverings is recommended but is not compulsory. If you plan to wear one, please bring your own mask, as it will fit you better and be more comfortable. However, if you arrive and have forgotten your mask, we will be able to supply you with one.
- We would ask that gloves are not used in the building. There is evidence that hand sanitiser can have an adverse reaction with rubber gloves which could lead to serious harm.
- You will notice that signage is provided throughout the buildings to provide guidance and floor markings are provided to assist you to maintain social distancing.
- If you think you may need some water to drink during a service, please bring your own bottle of water with you.
- There can be no loitering in the building or stopping in the foyer to speak to someone.
- You will be directed towards a door into the main auditorium. Please wait at the door until you are instructed to enter by a helper.
- To maximise our seating capacity, we would encourage families, or those in social bubbles to meet outside the church and enter the building together.

Seating

- When you are directed to enter the main auditorium, you will be shown to a seat by a deacon or helper.
- Due to the requirement to maintain social distancing and to maximise our seating you could be directed to a side of the church or to an area where you do not usually sit. Unfortunately, we are unable to facilitate people choosing their own seat at this time and we would ask you, without complaint, to take your seat in the place you are directed to by the deacon or helper.
- Ensure there are 3 clear seats in each row between people from different families/social bubbles.
- Remain seated while in the main meeting areas. You should not leave your seat unless essential. Please speak to people outside on the street where the risks are greatly reduced.
- If you feel unwell during the service or need to leave for an essential purpose, please avoid contact with others as you make your way up the aisle.

While in the building

- Always maintain social distancing.
- Follow the directions of all deacons or helpers without complaint. The deacons and helpers have a difficult task dealing with our current circumstances and your full co-operation would be appreciated.
- Doors along circulation routes will be kept open.
- As recommended in government guidance, the building will be well ventilated and may feel cooler than usual. Please bring a jacket or coat if you think you may need it.
- Please ensure that you do not leave any cups, tissues, or other rubbish behind. All rubbish should be disposed of in the bin bags provided adjacent to the exits.
- All hymnbooks have been removed to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Please do not enter the kitchen areas in the main church or Activity Centre as they are not to be used at the present time.

Childcare

- As always, we are delighted to have children with us in our services, and they are an important part of our congregation. We understand that it will be difficult to keep children socially distanced, so please supervise your children to ensure this.
- There is no crèche facility at this time, but if a child needs to be taken out of the service it will be possible to use the Sunday School room or upper room.
- It may be necessary to close a door to prevent the transmission of noise into the meeting area.
- Please advise a deacon or helper of any areas used or surfaces touched to aid cleaning.
- We would ask you to bring your own toys at this time.
- There will be no children's church initially. This will remain under review.

Format of the services

Family Service

- The content of our morning family service will generally follow the format you have been used to seeing on our online services, but with time also spent remembering the Lord. We plan to have two hymns, prayer, readings, and a sermon. There will be a children's talk, but children will remain in their seats instead of coming to the front of the building.
- Due to the risks associated with singing government advice recommends that we do not sing at this time. We will be playing hymns through the PA system or organ.
- At the beginning of the family service a time will be set aside to remember the Lord as we break bread. The format of this part of our service will be explained on the first day back.
- The entire morning service will finish no later than 12.45pm.
- A recording of the family service will be uploaded to Facebook and YouTube by early afternoon.

Breaking of Bread

- If you know the Lord as Saviour and fulfil the criteria outlined in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, you are welcome to partake of the emblems at the Lord's table during our morning service.
- You will appreciate that at this time it is challenging to distribute emblems in a way that ensures everyone's safety, and which gives everyone confidence in taking them. The method of distribution of the emblems will remain under review, but initially we will provide individual disposable cups and individually cut pieces of bread will be spread out on a tray so it is possible to lift a particular piece without touching any of the others. The emblems will be offered to you by a deacon who will pass between the rows.

Gospel Service

- The gospel service will be pre-recorded and will be uploaded to watch on Facebook or YouTube at 7.00pm on Sunday evening.

Thursday Bible Study & Prayer Meeting

- The meeting will be held in the main hall in the Activity Centre and will follow the same format as our Zoom midweek meeting and will last one hour.
- We will look at ways to keep the meeting live on Zoom for those who are not yet able to join us in the building.

Toilets

Use of the toilets in the main church will be particularly challenging and so we would ask that you adhere to the following guidance to ensure your personal safety and the safety of others.

- Toilets are available for essential use only.
- No more than two people can use the male or female toilets at the same time unless they are from the same household or social bubble.
- The accessible toilet will be available for use of one person at a time if required.
- Biodegradable wipes will be available in each of the toilets. The toilet seat and taps etc should be wiped prior to use and disposed of in the bins provided.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and use the paper hand towels to dry them before leaving the toilets.

- Those wishing to use the toilets should queue in the Sunday School Room as indicated. The deacon or helper responsible for the toilets will inform you when you can make your way into the toilet.

Stairs / Lift

- If you are directed to seating in the balcony, please use the stairs if possible.
- The lift should only be used if necessary.
- No more than one person or family group are to use the lift at any given time.
- Make sure the staircase is clear before using. There should be no passing on the stairs.

Exiting the Building

- At the end of the service we will exit the building row by row by all available exits.
- You should remain seated until you are directed to leave the building by a deacon or helper.
- If you usually give your offering using envelopes or other physical means, offering boxes will be provided at all exits. Please note that these will be open, to prevent you having to touch them. We would encourage those who have been making electronic bank transfers to continue this practice for the time being to minimise the amount of money needing to be handled.
- Dispose of all rubbish in bin bags which will be located at exits.
- Please move clear of all exits before speaking to others outside the building.

Everyone returning to Iron Hall for church services does so on the understanding that they accept the guidance issued and undertake to fully comply with it and all directions given by deacons and helpers within the buildings.

We look forward to seeing you soon as we gather to worship the Lord.

Issued by:

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