

POST-LOCKDOWN SERVICES IN THE NORTH MEMORIAL HALL (NMH)

With effect from 19 July 2021 in England, most legal ‘lockdown’ restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic were lifted. Organisations such as local churches still have the legal requirement to draw up and publish risk assessment documents, however, and the right to impose such restrictions on people taking part in their activities as their leaders consider appropriate to ensure everyone’s health and safety. This paper comprises the OEFC risk-assessment document to take effect from 25 July 2021. All those attending our services are required to comply with the requirements laid down within it.

Will the church open up fully on 25 July?

The church will certainly be open on 25 July. But the rising rate of Covid infections at present, and the profile of our typical congregations, means that we are sensible to continue to observe a number of Covid-related restrictions. These are indicated in this risk-assessment document.

Will anybody be able to come?

We are happy to welcome back people of all ages to our Sunday services. But you should not come:

- if you have any symptoms of Covid-19 – particularly an elevated temperature, persistent cough or changed sensation of smell/taste;
- if you are in close contact with someone who has Covid;
- if you have taken a Covid test and have tested positive;
- if you have been told to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace service;
- if you have not yet completed the quarantine, vaccination or other requirements imposed by the Government on travellers coming or returning to the UK from certain overseas destinations.

Can I bring my children with me?

Yes, but you must keep your family together, at all times, as a group.

Parents will be able to take babies and small children out to the extension at any time for a self-organised crèche, but we have no Sunday School classes running at present.

Will I simply be able to turn up?

It would be helpful if you would not do so, though we shall try not to turn anyone away! We have to ensure that we do not become a “crowded indoor space”, for which special rules may obtain, so must continue to restrict to no more than about fifty the number of people that can meet in the NMH.

To ensure that we have the seating set out appropriately, and that you do not have a wasted journey, please let us know by noon on Saturday if you hope to join us in person on Sunday morning.

We are no longer required by law to keep a record of all those who attend, but we shall continue to do so. This will enable us to inform people if, some time after a service, we are told that a member of our congregation has contracted Covid.

What precautions are being taken to minimise the risk of Covid infection?

To mitigate risks, we are advised to avoid physical contact with one another and pay particular attention to face coverings, social distancing and ventilation. To address all of these matters, please

- use the hand-sanitiser provided when entering the building;
- wear a mask within the building (unless, of course, you are exempt from doing so);
- bear in mind the continued need for sensible social distancing;
- note that we shall space out the seating more widely than pre-lockdown, and particularly so on the patio side of the Hall for the benefit of those who would prefer greater social distancing;
- note that we shall open all the windows in the Hall and, in reasonable weather, both the doors to the entrance lobby and the doors leading out to the patio.

Will there be singing in the service?

Yes, since there are now no legal restrictions on singing. Singing in enclosed spaces is still considered a risk factor, however, so we ask you to sing modestly from behind your mask.

Will the lavatories be available?

Yes. But please use the wipes supplied to disinfect any surfaces – door handles, flush levers, locks, taps, etc. – that you have touched.

Can I use one of the church Bibles?

Yes, but you should leave it on your seat at the end of the service. You may prefer to bring your own Bible, and we shall project the words of all Scripture readings and hymns on to the screen.

Will the offertory box be available?

Yes, though monies may not be counted and handled for some days after a service.

Can I get a drink from the kitchen during or after the service?

No. The kitchen will only be used for ‘overflow’ seating, and we shall not be serving refreshments at the end of the service. If you are likely to need food or drink during or at the end of a service, please bring it with you.

What will happen at the end of the service?

There will be the opportunity to meet and greet our fellow worshippers, though this is best done outside of the building if the weather permits. Over the summer months, we shall take the opportunity outside to sing two or three hymns, not least as a witness to our neighbours in the North Memorial Homes.

Will there soon be the opportunity to take Communion together?

There are no legal restrictions that would prevent us from doing so, but we have yet to choose a date on which to hold a Communion Service. In the first instance, a Communion Service may be quite separate an activity from our Sunday morning service.

How long will these Covid-related restrictions last?

We do not know. The church, like the country at large, will take some time to get used to the restored freedoms that now we have. And a number of people, including those who are clinically vulnerable, will want still to proceed with great caution.

We expect to review this document regularly, taking into account our own experience as a church, and all the local and national data that will be published on infection rates and vaccination levels.

As throughout this pandemic, we continue to pray for the guidance and mercy of God both for ourselves as individuals and for us as a company of His people.