

RESUMPTION OF SERVICES IN THE NORTH MEMORIAL HALL (NMH)

The second period of national lockdown comes to an end on 2 December, after which – unless we are then subject to more stringent local ‘tier’ restrictions – we shall be allowed to conduct collective acts of worship. This does not mean that we can meet again in the way that we used to do; we shall still be required to observe government-imposed guidelines to ensure that our meetings are Covid-secure.

Will the church open again for public services?

Yes, but in the first instance only on Sunday mornings and for the special service we hold on the first Wednesday of each month for Bible Study, Communion and Prayer. We may consider holding the latter service in daylight hours whilst Covid-related restrictions remain in place.

Will anybody be able to come?

Yes, but only if they do not have any symptoms of Covid-19 – particularly an elevated temperature, persistent cough or changed sensation of smell/taste – and are prepared to follow all the procedures that we have to put into place, not least those given on this document.

Note, however, that certain population groups are much more vulnerable to Covid-19 infection than others. Government guidelines suggest that, for their own benefit, at least the following groups of people should *avoid* meeting together at present: those aged 70 or older; pregnant women; those with chronic heart, liver, neurological or respiratory diseases; diabetics; those with a weakened immune system because of chemotherapy, disease or steroid treatments; those who are seriously overweight and have a body mass index of 40 or above.

Can I bring my children with me?

Yes, but you must keep your family together, at all times, as a group. Note also that there will be no organised crèche and no Sunday School classes at the Hall.

The disabled lavatory will be available for use by younger children, but they must be accompanied there by one of their parents.

Will I simply be able to turn up in the usual way?

No. We must observe social distancing rules, so can accommodate only a limited number of people in the North Memorial Hall. The precise number – between twenty and thirty – will depend on how many people come as ‘bubbles’, couples or families rather than as singles.

To ensure that we have the seating set out appropriately, and that you do not have a wasted journey, you must book by noon on Saturday for the Sunday morning service, or by an agreed time on Tuesday for the Wednesday service.

The Government requires us to keep a record of all those who attend our services so that, if requested, we can supply details to NHS Test and Trace. Attendance records are retained for twenty-one days.

What will happen when I turn up at the NMH?

You must wear a mask – see below – and must use the hand sanitiser provided.

In reasonable weather conditions, we may open the patio doors as well as the entrance lobby to provide two entrances and exits. And note that, whatever the weather, we shall have windows open to ensure that there is good ventilation in the Hall; you may have to wrap up more than normal!

Can I sit with my friends?

Seats will be set out in accordance with the bookings made. You can sit with anyone with whom you are living (your spouse, family or flatmate), or anyone in your ‘bubble’, but not with anyone else. You will be directed to the seats which you must occupy for the service, and should not move them.

Can I talk to other members of the congregation?

This is discouraged. You may want to greet someone quietly, at a distance, but should make use of the telephone as the safest way to have a prolonged or proper chat with them.

Remember that social distancing rules apply to *all* parts of the church domain – not only the NMH itself, but also the car parks, the paths leading to the Hall and the verandah. You must keep 2 m (over 6 feet) apart from others, both inside and outside of the building and should not congregate before or after the service to talk with friends. The ‘rule of six’ applies outside of the building, and our neighbours in the North Memorial Homes, or passers-by on Stoughton Road, will notice if we flout this.

Must I wear a mask?

Yes – it is a *legal requirement* to wear a mask or other face covering. And note that it must cover the mouth and nose, fit securely and be in place at all times.

As obtains in other closed spaces, there are exceptions – for children under the age of eleven, for example, or for those “who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability”.

What will happen in the service?

Our leaders must rely on amplification rather than voice projection, but we shall be able to enjoy Bible readings, prayer and a sermon in the usual way. We can also listen to live or recorded music.

We are *not* permitted to sing, or to share in any congregational readings or responses that would lead us individually to raise our voices above ordinary speaking level.

Will there be the opportunity to take Communion?

Yes, we shall be able to conduct Communion services. Each communicant will be given individual portions of bread and communion wine; we shall not be able to hand these along the rows as usual.

Will the lavatories be available?

Yes. As happens in other churches, though, we would encourage you *not* to use the toilets at the NMH unless it is absolutely necessary. There will be a strict ‘one-in, one-out’ regime, and you must 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 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 be out of bounds, and we shall not be serving any refreshments at the Hall. 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?

To comply with social distancing rules, we shall ask all members of the congregation to remain seated until they are invited, individually, to leave the building by the door indicated by a steward. Please then leave the site promptly and do not congregate outside of the building, even in the car parks.

How can I be sure that the NMH will be Covid-secure?

The church will be cleaned *between* services. We shall pay particular attention to those surfaces that people touch though, according to health guidelines, the time between our services should be more than adequate to ensure that the Hall will be infection-free when next we enter the building – which, other than for our agreed services, will not be in use.

The NMH should remain infection-free *during* our services provided each of us observes the various procedures listed on this document.