



# Church of Scotland

## Neilston Parish Church



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September 2020

Dear friends

Some good news! We are proposing to open the church for worship once more (see details below). We will be delighted to see people 'face to face' again but I must make a very important point----this is not without a degree of risk in the present circumstances. So, I would ask you to give considerable thought to the state of your own health before you make the decision to return. Also, you should consider whether, you personally, might carry any risk to others. It is our priority to keep everyone safe. Read on for details.

The Kirk Session met on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August to further consider the situation regarding the Covid-19 lockdown closure of our church building since March 2020 and the potential to re-open on a restricted basis with due regards for the health and safety of all concerned.

You may wonder why some churches have already reopened for public worship while we have not. It is the decision of each individual Kirk Session to determine when the time is right and that they are satisfied that appropriate measures have been put in place to mitigate, as far as possible, the on-going risk of Covid-19.

Over the past months, we have followed the Scottish Government's instructions regarding places of worship. The national Church of Scotland has issued guidance to be followed when preparing for restricted reopening. This guidance is continuously changing. It includes a very strict risk-assessment that requires presbytery approval before reopening, and strict guidelines that apply to everyone involved in the planning, the reopening and those attending public worship.

A small team has been working hard to prepare for the reopening. The Kirk Session, having fully considered all of the implications and plans, have agreed to reopen the church building on a limited basis. This started with a 'test' reopening on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September where only some of the Kirk Session and a small number of other designated people attended. This allowed us to test the plans to ensure they are fit for purpose and make any changes needed before reopening for wider public worship.

We will now reopen the church, on a limited basis, for public worship on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September at 11:00am, and each Sunday thereafter until further notice.

### **Reserving a place at church**

Due to the restrictions we can only have a maximum of 46 people at any service, including the Minister, organist and welcome team. Limited spaces for 37 people **must be booked in advance**. Please do not just turn up on the day in the hope of getting in.

To book a space for the Sunday service, please phone: **07846 022 879** on  
**Wednesdays** between **10:00am** and **12:00noon** or,  
**Thursdays** between **7:00pm** and **9:00pm**.

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Church Halls: 45 High Street, NEILSTON, East Renfrewshire, G78 3HJ | ☎ 0141 881 9445

[www.neilstonparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.neilstonparishchurch.org.uk)

Scottish Charity Number: SC035155

A member of the welcome team will take your name and contact details which will be stored for 21 days to comply with the NHS Test and Protect public health measure. We will ask if you have any specific requirements so that we can consider the most suitable seat allocation, and also ask if you are booking a space only for yourself or others (e.g. a spouse or family member). We cannot guarantee that couples or family groups will be able to sit together and you may be asked to sit in separate seats.

You can only book for one service at a time. Depending on demand, we may need to restrict your attendance to alternate weeks so that everyone who wants to be at church gets the same opportunity.

The Sunday services will be very different to what we were used to with restricted numbers and no singing. The reciting of the Lord's Prayer can only be done very quietly. It will be similar to online worship with music and the use of the screens to enhance what we do. There will be no refreshments after the service.

The services will be recorded while they happen so that we can upload them to YouTube and the telephone service later in the day. A very small number of people at the very front of the church may be seen on camera. If you have any objections to this, please request to be seated behind the camera.

### **Attending church - if you have a confirmed booking**

For the time being we are unable to provide transport so you will need to make your own way to and from the church.

When you arrive at the church, while you are there, and at the conclusion of the service, you must observe the **one-way system** and **two-metre social distancing** rule as directed by the welcome team.

You will be 'checked-in' before being directed to a seat. You will **not** be able to choose where you sit but if you have particular mobility or hearing needs, we will consider this in the seating allocation.

### **When you come to church, PLEASE:**

- Enter by the 'Holehouse' vestibule door (closest to Broadlie Road)
- Arrive from 10:30am onwards (not before this time) to allow time for the additional measures to be effective and for the service to start at 11:00am
- Wear a mask or face covering at all times (unless you have a medical exemption)
- Bring your own hand sanitiser for regular use but also sanitise your hands, on arrival and departure at the stations near the doors
- Use the offering boxes which are situated on the wall near the sanitising stations
- Be aware that the doors or windows must be open for ventilation so you may wish to wear appropriate layers of clothing
- Bring your own bottle of drinking water (if needed) as we cannot provide this
- Only use the toilet if you have an emergency
- Be respectful of the guidance and directions given to you by the welcome team
- **If you feel unwell while in church please alert a member of the welcome team**

At the end of the service, you will be asked to stay in your seats until a steward directs you to leave by the 'Kirkhill' vestibule door. If you have mobility issues that means you can only use the 'Holehouse' vestibule door, please remain in your seat until everyone else has left.

This situation will be kept under review by the Kirk Session. Any further changes required will be made and some of these could be at very short-notice. Information on the reopening of our church halls will be intimated separately at a later date.

You may choose not to return for the time being for your own health reasons and that is perfectly sensible and understandable. Church will still be available on-line using YouTube and the dial-in phone service.

If you have read all the details and you feel able to attend, we will welcome you to church once again. Remember that the first priority for yourself and others is "to be safe".

*Maureen*