



Dear StAG church family,

We know as a nation that we have all lived through unprecedented times in the last 18 months and we remain grateful to God for the way in which we can trust in his purposes throughout it all. While we have coped with the lockdowns and restrictions in numerous ways via livestream church, socially distanced services and Zoom calls, we long for an end to these things.

Next week, the government have announced we will see the end of nearly all legal restrictions aimed at curbing the pandemic. Many of us will be excited by the prospect of reclaiming our lost freedoms, and especially when it comes to attending church. There will be the chance to sit with those outside your bubble, to be able to chat casually in your seats, to not have to sign up for services.

But we are very aware that 19th July won't be the end of the pandemic. For some, the ending of restrictions is a cause for genuine anxiety, and the prospect of being in a busy church building provokes real concerns.

The senior staff and the churchwardens are continually talking about how we safely manage church activities after 19 July. Our Operations and Facilities Manager, Laura Murray, is keeping up to date with new law and guidance. However, as with many issues in church life, we know there will be a variety of opinions on how we should proceed. Therefore, we thought it would be helpful to outline the principles that will guide our decision making.

1. We will be led by government guidance.

We voluntarily chose to suspend services for a short period amid surging deaths in January, but thankfully the situation is markedly different now. Therefore, we will not be restricting ourselves where the government gives us freedom. There will be no legal restrictions on gatherings, so we won't impose a limit ourselves, nor will we require people to sign up to come along. We have 600 seats available, so we will encourage people to spread out and strongly encourage continued wearing of facemasks.

2. We have a duty of care, physically and spiritually.

As outlined above, we will continue to follow government guidance when it comes to physical safety. However, we must equally protect our spiritual health. The dangers of continued restrictions on our ability to be a church family together are serious – a church online is not the same as a church in person. We want to help each other, care for each other and point one another to Jesus – this is much harder when we can't be together

physically. For those unable to attend church in person the livestream will continue, but After Church Coffee on Zoom will not operate after 18th July.

3. We will continue to seek to love our neighbour as ourselves.

We are God's household, redeemed and secured through the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 2:14-22). We are family. As such, we want to bear with one another in love. The Gospel unites us, so we must not let anything else divide us – even covid. Therefore, we will still encourage everyone to head over to Christ's Pieces after the service each Sunday, so any who are less comfortable in the building can still enjoy being with others. We will continue to be driven by serving one another, reaching out to others and making StAG a church that is accessible for all people.

Thank you so much for your prayers and patience as we seek to navigate these tricky times.

With love in Christ

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Jair". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

For the senior staff and churchwardens