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21 July 2021

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE NEC CHURCH FAMILY

Dear NEC Church Family

We write following the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions by the Government on Monday 19 July 2021. The impact of this upon the NEC and its churches is that there are no formal restrictions upon our worship services as there had been previously. The government has, however, issued important caution regarding [how to stay safe and prevent the spread](#):

Although most legal restrictions have been lifted at step 4, and many people have been vaccinated, it is still possible to catch and spread COVID-19, even if you are fully vaccinated, and we are still in the third wave of this pandemic in the UK.

COVID-19 will be a feature of our lives for the foreseeable future, so we need to learn to live with it and manage the risk to ourselves and others.

As COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, it is important that we all use personal judgement to manage our own risk. All of us can play our part by exercising common sense and considering the risks. While no situation is risk free, there are actions we can take to protect ourselves and others around us.

The lifting of restrictions will of course be a relief for many, however, we also recognise that many will, rightly be cautious about the impact that the new Governmental position may have upon their health and wellbeing.

We have carefully considered the Governments guidelines, the readily available infection data and the feedback that we have received from many of you.

In particular, we are aware of the following information:

- Britain reported more new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday (21/07/2021) than any other country in the world except for America.
- The UK has been at or near the top of the global league for new infections for several days now following a steep rise in cases as a third wave sweeps the nation.
- The 44,104 fresh cases detected in Britain over the past 24 hours is greater than that witnessed by almost all countries currently battling the biggest outbreaks of cases, including Indonesia, India, Brazil, Russia and Spain, analysis shows.

Whilst we will of course adhere to the Governments guidelines, which allow for churches to reopen for face-to-face, communal worship, we do still have to consider the health and wellbeing of all of the NEC Church family. This is a position which is mirrored by several organisations amidst evidence that there are still ongoing risks.

The following are a summary of the changes that apply to places of worship from 19 July:

- There are no longer limits on the number of people you can meet. This means there are no restrictions on group sizes for attending communal worship.
- Legal requirements for social distancing will no longer apply and you will not need to stay 2 metres apart from people you do not live with.
- There are no legal restrictions on the number of people that can attend a place of worship, baptisms, and funeral services.
- Face coverings are no longer required by law in any setting. However, the Government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas. Places of worship should consider the relevance of this.
- COVID-secure rules, including restrictions on singing will no longer apply. However, there are steps everyone should continue to consider to reduce the risk of transmission. Places of worship should follow the principles set out and [available here](#).
- There will no longer be limits on the number of people who can sing indoors or outdoors. This includes indoor congregational and communal singing.

Full details of the government guidance can be [accessed here](#).

Although the Government has relaxed many of the restrictions including removing social distancing rules, the NEC remains cautious. Places of worship still represent environments where transmission could take place due to their rightful open invitation to family, friends and visitors alike. As a result of the continuing risks presented, we still strongly recommend that physical distancing is applied. This will help limit the spread of COVID19. Having due regard for physical social distancing would involve that we strive keep a distance of at least 1 meter from each other and avoid / limit spending time in crowded places or in groups where possible.

Due to our ongoing concerns and caution, the NEC will still require that churches submit a risk assessment before opening for face-to-face, communal worship. This is a mandatory requirement to ensure that together we are still doing what we can to keep our church family safe.

Many churches have already submitted risk assessments which have been approved and these churches can continue their plans to re-open providing approval from the NEC has been obtained. For those churches who have not submitted a risk assessment as yet, we are asking that the church is not opened until a risk assessment has been completed and approved.

Understanding ongoing concerns regarding the health and wellbeing of the NEC church family, given its various characteristics, we enclose below the links to videos prepared last week by Dr Beatrice Kastrati, the NEC's Health & Possibilities Director. We pray these will provide you will with invaluable information regarding steps which you can take to promote your immediate and longer term health and wellbeing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsTb2bQpMrk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OSVMALwluk>

We wish to thank you for the way in which you have continued to support each other during this pandemic, particularly all of the first line workers within our church family. We encourage you to continue to offer your hand in support to others in any ways that you can.

Yours sincerely



Pastor Richard Jackson
Pastor & President
Extending God's Kingdom – Nurturing Each Other and Winning Another