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# Pulteneytown & Thrumster Church

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JULY 2020

Dear congregation of Pulteneytown and Thrumster Church,

I hope you are knowing God's grace, peace, help and strength in the midst of these strange and hard times. This has been and continues to be my prayer for you all. I am writing to you to share the decisions of our Kirk Session regarding the reopening of our buildings. Having considered the guidelines of the Scottish Government and the Church of Scotland, it is our decision that we should open our buildings in a limited way from the **9<sup>th</sup> August 2020**.

I understand that not everyone will agree with our decisions. Some will want the Church to open in a fuller way and earlier, others will want us to be more cautious. I ask for your understanding and trust that the elders have considered all the relevant advice carefully and that we are seeking to do our best, under God for the nurturing of the congregation and the safety of our community.

### What are we doing?

Our new weekly pattern of limited opening will be a **service at Pulteneytown at 11.30am, Thrumster at 3.00pm** and a **video with the same message available on YouTube and through the phone line**. The elders do not anticipate opening our buildings for further activities at this time but will continue to monitor the relevant advice. We also want to continue with **our Tuesday Zoom "catch up"** where folks can meet together online at 7.00pm. We have also started a **monthly online Zoom prayer meeting**, which will meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at 6.30pm. Details of how to attend these online meetings can be obtained by contacting me or by signing up to the weekly Church email.

### Why are we doing this?

These activities will allow us, within guidelines mentioned, to carry out some essential functions of the spiritual life of our congregation: Gathered worship, extra fellowship and special times to pray for God's work among us. We trust that these are some of the most important elements that God has given us in Church life. God has always gathered, nurtured, empowered, renewed and strengthened His people as they gather under His word and we believe this is the best way for us to continue this within our current restrictions.

### What will it be like to come to a service?

In this new phase, our services will be different to what we are used to. On entering the building, there will be hand gel to wash our hands. There will be no notice sheets, bibles or hymn books available. We will not be able to sit in our usual places. Seating at Pulteneytown has been re-arranged so that people can sit alone or as a household in a physically distanced way. We cannot currently open the balcony. At Thrumster, pews are marked so that we can sit distanced from one another.

The content of our services will be different. The government currently advises against singing. We hope that we will be able to play some music and hum along together, as well as play music videos to aid us to worship God through music. While this is disappointing, singing is only part of gathered worship. The experience of attending worship will also be very different:



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- The government advises use of face coverings (like we would use in shops)
- The Church will not serve drinks but folks are welcome to bring water bottles.
- We will only be able to open a limited number of toilets.
- The government require our Church to be part of the NHS Test and Protect system. This means that we will all be required to provide our names and phone numbers each time we attend a service. The Church will adhere to all GDPR regulations to collect and store data.
- We will leave the building in stages to preserve distancing measures.

### Who is welcome at our services?

Everyone is always welcome to our services. I understand that some folks may want to delay their return to our building because of their own health, or the health of others they live with. It is up to each individual to decide when to return to our buildings. Included with this letter is an “assessment tool” provided by the Church of Scotland to guide your decision. If you, or others you are close to in the fellowship can’t attend the service in public, why not gather in a home to share in the video together? After 10<sup>th</sup> July the government have allowed us to meet with up to two others households indoors. It may be that this is the best way for you to share in the worship in this next stage. **However, if you do, please do not sing with people from other households inside.**

To begin with, our Church minibus will not be collecting people to come to worship. However, we will review this regularly.

Unfortunately, we will not be restarting our activities for youth and children at this time. However, we very much encourage families to attend worship together. We will provide materials to help young folks engage with the service as they attend. All are welcome, and even if younger children are a little restless and make a little noise, we would prefer that they join with us than stay away.

### What are the next steps?

I would appreciate it greatly if you would pass on this information to anyone who you think might appreciate it. Please also feel free to invite others to Church.

We also need some help in the area of cleaning. We need to disinfect each building between each use. We are setting up a rota of folks to spread the load, and I would appreciate volunteers.

Please also keep the enclosed information card handy as a quick reference guide. If you still have further questions once you have read this letter and the other documents included, please contact our Session Clerk, Iain Maclean. His details are on the Church website. I am on annual leave from the 25<sup>th</sup> July – 7<sup>th</sup> August inclusive.

The government’s advice is necessarily changing frequently and it may be that we will have to change our plans. We will not always be able to write like this when there are changes. The easiest way for us to keep everyone updated is still the weekly email. If you have not already, please sign up or ask a family member to sign up by emailing [info@pulteneytownChurch.org.uk](mailto:info@pulteneytownChurch.org.uk). We will also continue to publish updates on our Facebook page and website.

Finally, I am very thankful for all who have been praying for and keeping in touch with the many of our congregation and others in our community. Many people feel isolated at this time and we want to show God’s love and care to all. Please continue to do this as you are able.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Andrew Barrie