

Dear church family,

Several years ago, I remember David Longley preaching on 2 John for us. I remember him pointing out this little detail in the letter, and explaining that through the epistles especially, there is regular insistence on the joy of meeting face to face.

2 John verse 12 says

*'I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete'*

They say 60% of communication is body language, tone, not just written words, and we can give thanks that through our Zoom services, we've retained a lot more 'face to face' contact than we would otherwise have had. But I'm sure if you're like me, you're looking forward to the joy of face to face meetings again, sharing in fellowship and our lives together, welcoming in people to hear about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God willing, on 16th August, we will begin again meeting in a Covid Secure church meeting. This has been fully risk assessed and planned by a great cross section of the church - Matthew Pepper, Beccy Cole, Ben and Harriet Miller, Toby Parkin, Veljo Huugen, Jo de Jong and myself. We feel that by the 16th we'll be ready to run 4pm services, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes in St John's school hall once again.

The planning for this has been quite painstaking, and we hope through that to avoid any hiccups. As a congregation planning to attend, I'd be incredibly grateful if you'd read through the following carefully as your guide to attending a Covid-secure church gathering safely.

- 1) **How do I book in?** *Use the ChurchSuite ticketing system (also available via the church web calendar):* In order to plan seating, control attendance, and keep a log of who is attending in line with the government recommendations for places of worship, we would like all people who are able to, to book themselves into church as far ahead as possible. The ticketing system will go live on Monday 10th August at 12 midday. It will operate on a first come first served basis. If you aren't sure how to use ChurchSuite email [bookings@emmanuelcanterbury.com](mailto:bookings@emmanuelcanterbury.com)
- 2) **When do services start?** *16th August, weekly at 4pm.* Try not to turn up at the last minute: We know that this isn't always possible, for lots of reasons, but do try and arrive ahead of time if you possibly can. When you arrive, if there are others in front of you, please queue keeping 2m distance (at least the length of your arm

and another person's arm outstretched). Bear with those welcoming as we get used to the new process.

- 3) **Does 2m distancing apply in church?** *Yes. Please remember social distancing - stay 2metres apart from anyone not in your household. This applies outside as well as inside.*
- 4) **Who will I sit with?** *Stay with your household bubble:* You will only need to make one booking for your household, whether that is 1 of you, or 6 of you. If there is a single person who is in your household bubble - for instance a grandparent, they can join your group and be included in your booking. If you know of a single person who isn't yet in a bubble and would like to be, please consider whether you can 'adopt them' and they can attend with you (check with [guidance](#) if you aren't sure about bubbles).
- 5) **Do I need to bring anything?** *Yes, Please bring a mask* and wear it once in the building: In line with government guidance, we are asking all over 11s to wear a face covering, this can be a simple cloth face covering which are widely available.
- 6) **Anything else?** *Please bring your own hand sanitiser* to use as you come in and as you leave: This will mean that we don't exhaust the school's supply of hand sanitiser, although these are positioned at appropriate points in St John's
- 7) **Anything else else?** *Yes, Bibles, bread if it's a Lord's Supper service and a cup for wine/non-alcoholic grape juice.*
- 8) **Where will I sit?** You'll be signposted to your seat(s) by the welcome team, it might feel a little 'bare' when you come in. We're sorry about that, but you can be sure that all of the seating spaces are Covid-secure 2m distanced.
- 9) **Should I come if I'm categorised as clinically vulnerable?** *Yes, you can come to our Covid-Secure services unless you are in the 'extremely vulnerable category' and informed as such by the NHS via letter.* If you are in the extremely vulnerable category, at the moment the advice from the government is not to attend places of worship. If you are in the vulnerable category the government's guidance is to keep social interaction to a minimum and take extra care with social distancing and hygiene measures. For this reason, some people in these groups may judge that they do not wish to come at this stage. Ultimately it is a personal decision and the government's information is advisory.
- 10) **Will the toilets be in use?** *Yes, but try to avoid using them if you can.* The service is only short. Many toilets will be 'sealed off' and out of use. If you do use the toilets, please flush the toilet with the lid down if there is a lid, and clean down the flusher handle and toilet seat after you've used it (using provided wipes). Sanitise your hands both before entering the toilet and leaving it ('gel in, gel out')

- 11) **Will the Lord's Supper be celebrated, I've missed it!** *Yes, but it will be different for now. Please bring your own bread and cup for wine / non alcoholic grape juice.* Emmanuel church will provide wine or non-alcoholic grape juice. The bread we 'share in' will be symbolic for the time being and stationed at the front for us all to see.
- 12) **How will the service be different?** *There will be no singing, visors will be worn by anyone participating in hosting the service so it might seem as if people are grumpy - when actually you just can't see their faces.* The service will be short and follow a simple liturgy, but we will be meeting, it will be meaningful. The important thing though is that on August 16th, God willing, we will 'gather'.
- 13) **Can I talk to people in the building?** *Yes! As long as you maintain 2m social distance and don't raise your voice above conversational level. If you have a hearing aid, make sure you bring it along, it is on and turned up.*
- 14) **My children couldn't possibly social distance, what shall I do?** We'd encourage you to consider coming anyway if it's possible for someone to look after your children as a couple. We'd encourage you to come to the children's service, which will be happening soon. There will be a separate document & video released on this service prior to that date so watch this space!
- 15) **What happens at the end?** At the end of the service, you will be filed out of the exit - which will be different to the entrance - by the service leader. Please don't stay too long to talk to people afterwards, instead, why not invite someone from church around to spend time with you to chew over what you've been thinking about and hearing on Sunday.

*Matthew 18:20 'where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there am I with them'*

We can't wait to meet together as a church again!

So here's your checklist before you leave the house:

**Have I got my wallet/phone/keys/mask/hand sanitiser/bread/cup/Bible?**

**'Gel in and gel out' of church and toilets**

**I need to keep my distance - 2 arms lengths away from everyone who isn't in my bubble.**

**Have I gone to the toilet before leaving the house?**

The risk assessment team and the elders won't be 'policing' your behaviour, but we're there to guide those who might be a bit nervous or uncertain.

The services will feel odd, empty and sparse at first, but if we start small, and get used to this new way of meeting, then we can build on what we start with. We can't have a 'normal service' just like that, we'll have to build towards it slowly.

Blessings, and in anticipation of meeting together again soon,

So finally: **Please do come and book early!**

*Dave Gould on behalf of*

*The Risk Assessment Group (#EmmanuelRAG) at Emmanuel Church Canterbury*