

BELFAST CATHEDRAL IS RETURNING TO PUBLIC WORSHIP!

From Sunday 2nd August 2020

Morning Worship

11.00am

Dear Cathedral Parishioners,

As a cathedral community we have continued to worship together in spirit by our online and telephone audio services throughout the Lockdown period. Through this time we have been reminded that, although physically separate, we are united in Christ. Now the time has come, for us to renew our shared worship within the cathedral building. During August this will take the form of a Service of the Word, following the format we have been using on-line.

We have waited until August in order to pass the date when shielding has been relaxed. However, we understand that you may be anxious about returning to public worship, and we want to reassure you that we will be ensuring that all good practices will be carried out.

As a result of social distancing and hygiene measures, cathedral worship will look quite different from how it was before Lockdown. The purpose of this document is to advise you of all such changes. We are following the guidance provided by the House of Bishops and Representative Church Body in their document "*Church of Ireland Return to In-Church Worship Protocols for ROI and NI*" (You can view this document on the Church of Ireland website www.ireland.anglican.org).

Whilst we encourage you to join us in person on Sunday mornings at 11am, we are aware that some may be reluctant to return to public spaces, including the cathedral. For the time being we will continue to offer digital access to morning worship, through an 11am live stream of the cathedral service on Facebook, and an audio recording later in the day on the Telephone Audio Service (028 95 320355). We hope that you will gradually feel confident enough to return in person, and that these guidelines will contribute to that process.

CATHEDRAL WORSHIP- BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER SERVICES

BEFORE THE SERVICE

You must not attend cathedral services if you or anyone in your household is displaying any Covid-19 symptoms:

- High temperature
- New, continuous cough
- Loss or change in your normal sense of taste or smell

This is in accordance with Government Regulations.

Preparing to attend

In preparing to attend the cathedral on Sunday morning, we are advising that all worshippers wear face masks. Single use masks are available at the West End. Please plan to bring your own tissues.

Our public toilets are **closed** at present. The disabled toilet will be reserved for emergency use only. *If used we are requesting that the user cleans the toilet and wash hand basin themselves following use.* We regret the inconvenience this may cause.

Entering the cathedral

When you arrive at the West Doors you will be greeted by a warden who will welcome you inside. Hand sanitiser will be available inside, and we request you to apply it. There will also be a collection basket for your Sunday collection. (Alternatively you may leave your collection on exiting the cathedral). A steward will guide you to your seat. Orders of Service will already be placed on your seat.

It is important to note that seating within the nave will be quite different. Seats will be spaced appropriately, in pairs or in groups. Space is certainly a great gift in our case! Members of a household should sit together, but individual worshippers should maintain social distancing. *The congregation will be seated from the front back: individuals will not be able to sit in their customary position. You will be guided to a seat by a cathedral warden.* Please note that this is strict cathedral policy to adhere to the guidelines issued. We are sorry for this inconvenience, but hope that it will be understood in the interests of responsible mutual care.

It is **essential** that all worshippers complete the contact tracing information on the front of the Order of Service. This simply asks for your name and telephone number. We will hold this information in the strictest of confidence, and destroy it under data protection after 21 days from the date of the service. The government requires us to obtain this information in the event of someone who has attended the cathedral contracting Covid-19 infection. Please bring a pen for your own use, although pens can also be provided. At the end of the service, please leave your Order of Service with contact information on your seat.

During the service please stay in your place and avoid moving away from your seat, except in cases of emergency. We would ask that you plan to be seated by **10.55am**.

DURING THE SERVICE

Unfortunately, at present, there will be no congregational singing. However, there will be music at various points through the service, and some singing by members of the cathedral choir to provide opportunities for private reflection.

There will be no collection during the service. If you did not leave your collection in the basket when entering the cathedral, you will have opportunity to do so at the West End as you leave the building. There will also be a contactless paypoint available for you to use with your credit or debit card. Please remember that our cathedral faces a critical financial crisis as the result

of the Covid Lockdown, and every penny you contribute will help us avoid some very serious consequences

The length of the service will be intentionally reduced, to 40-45 minutes, to limit exposure to infection. The absence of congregational singing facilitates this, as well as strenuous effort by the preachers to practise precision and brevity, a feature that we expect congregation members to fully endorse!

If you become unwell during the service please indicate to a warden. We have designated the Chapel of the Holy Spirit as an isolation area. Personal Protective Equipment will be provided to the designated volunteers, for their safety as well as the individual.

This means that the Chapel of the Holy Spirit will not be available for prayer and meditation as it normally would be.

AFTER THE SERVICE

We request that you **do not** congregate anywhere within the building, but proceed as directed by the wardens to exit the West Doors. Rows will be vacated from the back to the front of the cathedral, in order to limit contact. We recognise that this may appear artificial but this measure is to provide an efficient process of safe exit.

Please do not take your order of service with you, but leave it, with the completed track and trace information, on your seat.

At this point we will not be providing post-service refreshments within the building. However, if members of the congregation wish to bring a thermos, it might be possible to gather in small groups and at a safe distance, in the car park.

We realise that the guidance in this letter may seem complicated. However, these instructions are given for the benefit of us all. It is with real joy that we are able to return to public worship within our cathedral building. Whilst this will feel different, we hope you will be encouraged by this development, and will make the decision to join us in person, when you feel the time is right.

Grace and peace,

Stephen Forde

(Dean)



The Very Reverend Stephen B Forde

Dean of Belfast

