



## **Principles to consider in returning to physical gathering**

### *Physical well-being*

Our plans are governed by our commitment to love our neighbour and each other. We remain committed to protecting the safety and health of the church family and community our church family connects with. We are especially committed to protecting those most vulnerable to the virus. This was our commitment as restrictions began and it remains our commitment as we move out of restrictions.

### *Spiritual well-being*

Even while physically distanced, we are committed to make every effort to build one another up in our faith and knowledge of God. We want to learn of Jesus together, to have the gospel change our minds and hearts, so that we may walk worthily. Be assured of my commitment to lead us in this shared task, whether we are together or apart. I am convinced that being together is better for our spiritual well-being, so we look forward to when that is possible.

### *Church unity*

We are committed to the theological reality that because of Christ Jesus, we as a church, are one body. We aim to make decisions that benefit all, not some. We seek to carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6). If one part suffers from not being able to meet physically, we will look for ways to carry that together. If opportunities to meet physically open up, we will look for ways to enjoy and rejoice in that together (1 Corinthians 12.26). While we have many parts - people, ministries, groups, congregations - we are one church family. We want to express that in the way we make our plans.

Our '*Return to Gathering Framework*' aims to apply these principles to steps 1 and 2 of the Government's roadmap. Please take some time to read it and reflect on how you might personally apply the above principles at each step. We are currently working on applying the principles to step 3 and will update you in due course.

Over the page I have provided some commentary on how we have applied the principles to step 1 and 2, plus some preliminary comments around plans for step 3.

## **Applying the principles to Step 1 & 2**

### *Physical well-being*

Given the current building works on site (with only the main church building useable) and in adherence to government's guidelines and diocesan advice, we will continue the current suspension of ministry activities onsite and formal group activities in homes (unless current restrictions for homes are expanded in step 2).

### *Spiritual well-being*

We commit as a church family to meet online for Sunday church, youth group and Small Groups.

Our care team can now visit people pastorally in their homes and we are looking for opportunities to visit those who would appreciate a visit.

Within the current government guidelines, we encourage church family members to initiate creative ways to meet physically with other members of the church family for mutual fellowship, friendship and encouragement.

- Why not invite others to go on a walk with you or meet at a park?
- Share a meal with someone?
- Invite someone to join you for Sunday's live-stream?
- Meet to pray with 2 or 3 folk from your small group?
- Visit someone who is isolated and would appreciate support?

Make use of devotional material available on the new website (coming soon)

Pray for others in the church family and make use the daily prayer email.

Consider one person in your network of friendships who is not yet a follower of Jesus, pray for them daily, and consider how you might share your faith with them.

### *Church unity*

Pray for the staff team as we adapt to changes going forward that we may be united as a church, even if changes are slow and not as we would choose.

Be mindful for those who are struggling and look for ways to support them.

## Applying the principles to Step 3

The path back out of restrictions is much more complex than the path into restrictions. We are considering the implications of the government's step 3 for St Andrew's, given the constantly changing map.

Below are few things we know already.

The easing of restrictions to 100 people, with appropriate physical distancing, still significantly hinders our ability to meet on site. The current main meeting space would accommodate a maximum of 40-50 adults/children. Until the *Building for the Future Project* is completed no other part of the site can be used to accommodate further people (up to a maximum of 100 - adults and children). It is important to say (especially with the principle of church unity in mind) that we will not be able to all meet on site until the *Building for the Future* project is completed. Even then, while we remain in step 3, the way we all gather on site will need to change.

We are currently developing plans for how we can meet physically on site in step 3. There are a number of possible ways forward that we need to consider.

We will update our plans in due course. I ask for your patience, I welcome your prayers and invite any reflections you have on our plans.

In Him,

Andrew Rees