

# Return to Grace

It's been a long time since we have been together, and we know how much we all desire to have fellowship. God willing, we plan to take our first steps towards this from Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September, but they will be first steps. We won't have an immediate and complete return; instead, it will be in stages, an opening up of our services, whilst maintaining our safety.

Our initial plan is to begin by inviting you to the services on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. This is to allow 72 hours between services, which experts say is enough to reduce the risk from Covid 19. We will of course have a review date to consider the next steps beyond this starting process.

## Things will be different

If you are able to join us, you will find considerable changes within the building, and changes to how the services will look and feel. For example:

- The Crèche, Served and Balcony will all be closed
- The Male and Female Toilets will be closed, and the Disabled a toilet will be available as a temporary unisex toilet
- We won't have tea and coffee after the services, but please bring bottles of water with you if you need them
- There will be Stewards around to help you, and markings on the floor to guide you

This might look a bit daunting, but it is to protect all of us.

Importantly, it allows us to be together in worship.

## When you arrive

Please aim to arrive no earlier than 15 minutes before the start. When you arrive, you will be greeted by a Steward at the front entrance of Grace. By this stage, we would ask you to be wearing your face coverings (now mandatory since 8 August). We also ask that you allow us to record your name and telephone number, to facilitate the Track and Trace system. And of course, there will be no hand shakes, elbow bumps or hugs! Please then use the Hand Sanitiser before walking through the Foyer.

As you walk through the Foyer, you will see that you will not be able to stop and chat. Another Steward will be there to keep us all moving steadily into the Auditorium.

## Inside the church

Once inside the main Auditorium, another Steward will show you to your seat(s). We will be seating people starting from the front, so as to reduce physical contact. The seats will be arranged to accommodate families, support bubbles, individuals and pairs. This is done so that we can maximise attendance at the same time as minimising risk. Once in your designated seat, please remain where you are for the duration of the service.

Please note that the Donations Boxes will be open for use, but we encourage you to continue to use online giving if possible. Also, can we ask that you do not approach the Sound Desk, both for hygiene reasons, and because the A/V Team have much more preparation work to do now than before.

You will notice some changes within the room, and in how the service takes place. The chairs will have more space between rows. There may be stage lights on the floor. And from about 30 minutes

before we begin, the A/V Team and Stuart will be doing a run-through of the service. This is because we will continue to stream all the services, just as we have been doing during lockdown. Also, there will not be any Bibles under the seats, to further reduce risk, but of course the Scriptures will be projected on the screens as normal.

### **What the service will look like**

The services will start promptly at 6.15pm on Sunday, and 7.30pm on Wednesday. Both will last a maximum of one hour in total. As you know, we will not be singing during the services. But we will continue to play hymns and songs, just as we have during streaming.

We will continue to worship God with our music, and we will do it together.

We would encourage everyone to use their own toilets before leaving home. But should someone need to use the toilet at church, a Steward will allow access, and the facilities will be sprayed with antibacterial spray after use.

### **At the end**

At the end of the service, the Auditorium will be emptied one chair group at a time, starting with those at the back. Don't worry about knowing when to leave; the Stewards will tell each row when it is your turn.

As when you came in, we ask you leave straight through the Foyer, and head outside. And please can we ask that you don't congregate around the outside front door. A Steward will be around to keep us all moving.

### **What if**

We want to tell you also that should any attendee subsequently test positive for Covid 19, then those who may have been in contact with them will be notified. If you are notified, you will be asked to not attend any services for the next 10 days.

If you would like to read the official **Grace Action Plan**, and to view the accompanying video, go to our website: [www.gracebaptist.org.uk](http://www.gracebaptist.org.uk).

### **Conclusion**

We know this marks a real change in behaviour and feel to our services since we last met on March 15<sup>th</sup>. But all that we are striving to do is to care for and protect each other, with love. Nothing that we are putting in place is perfect, but it is the best for now. We have planned review dates in place, and trust that in the Lord's will, we will be able to work towards more normality. Please bear with us, and bear with each other as we continue to navigate these unusual times.

Finally: can you recall the last hymn we all sang together? Our closing hymn on March 15<sup>th</sup> was "It is well with my soul". Look and read one of the verses we sang together:

*"Though Satan may buffet, though trials may come,  
Let this calm assurance control:  
That Christ knows my need and my helplessness here  
And has shed his own blood for my soul.  
It is well with my soul."*

May the God who has led each step of this journey so far, continue to give us the calm assurance that Christ knows our every need, and had shed His own blood for my soul.