

Guidelines for the reopening of Methodist Buildings on the Isle of Man.

In response to communications which the leaders of Churches Alive in Mann have had with government, the public health department have issued the following advice:

“The Isle of Man now has, at most, very low levels of COVID-19 circulating in our community here and that means that currently all of us are at very low risk of catching the virus. As there is now only a very low risk of catching COVID-19 here, people are advised (including the clinically vulnerable groups) to return to more normal activities – including exercise and social interactions. Whilst it can never guarantee that anyone is 100% safe from any risk of infection and therefore everyone must make the decision that feels right for them based on how they feel about the very low risk of COVID-19 compared with the benefits of return to more normal activities. It remains important that people observe good hygiene with regards to hand hygiene and those who are ill should consider staying at home and not spreading infections to others. If Covid-19 any symptoms of infection is suspected people are advised to contact 111 for advice”.

In view of this and other changes announced by the Chief Minister in his update on June 15th, it is now possible to begin the reopening of Methodist Church buildings and the reintroduction of public worship.

This will be done in an orderly fashion and we now have permission from Connexional officers in the UK to proceed, ahead of the rest of the Connexion, in line with advice and guidance issued by the Isle of Man Government.

On June 28th we will recommence public worship by holding a united service in each section, at the centres previously designated in our ‘Covid 19 The Way Forward’ document. There will be no restrictions on the numbers who can attend. In order to allow time for the making of a new preaching plan we will hold a second united service in the same centres on July 5th and this will be a service including communion.

From the receipt of this guidance document, individual chapels can begin to make plans, in consultation with their minister, to reopen for public worship from July 12th. This doesn’t mean that you have to reopen then if you are not comfortable to do so but this will be the earliest date.

In order to make the plan we will need to know your intentions as soon as possible. Please liaise with your minister who will inform the District Office on your behalf. We need to know asap even if you intend to open later than the 12th.

It is not possible at this stage to guarantee that we will be able to provide a preacher for every chapel by that date as some of our preachers may be being more cautious in terms of their availability in these early days of the reopening. For the foreseeable future we will continue to provide online worship resources and it may be that some chapels will choose to meet and, in the absence of a preacher, view together the online offering or conduct a congregational praise service.

No building can be reopened for any purpose until you have discussed the matter with your minister and your minister has informed District Office that the following requirements have been met.

1. All safety certificates must be up to date for such things as fire, electricity and pat testing. If these have lapsed during lockdown they will need to be done before opening can be allowed.
2. Whilst there is no longer a requirement for professional cleaning it is of course important that buildings that have been closed up for some time are properly aired and cleaned before reopening.
3. Hand sanitizer must be made available at all entrances to the building and it will be necessary to make space available for anyone who still wishes to social distance whilst in worship.
4. Singing will be permitted.
5. Hand sanitiser and anti-bacterial wipes/sprays must be provided in all toilet facilities.
6. Coffee/refreshments will be permitted after service and indeed encouraged to enable people to mix and chat.
7. We will, at least until the end of July, be required to keep a note of those attending any function which we organise on church premises, whether for worship or any other purpose. There will be a proforma for doing this. All that is needed is a date, a name and a phone number. This should be recorded on the sheet provided,

not in a book, as within the requirements of GDPR this will not be a permanent record. A single sheet will be used for each event, stored securely and destroyed after 21 days. This will allow for tracking and tracing should there be a need within the fourteen day incubation period of the virus. This form will be available for download from our website www.methodist.org.im or if you need hard copies these can be obtained by calling 625408.

8. Because of the possibility of legionnaires disease being present in water systems that have been shut down during the lockdown all taps should be run once for twenty minutes to eliminate this risk. Realising the current water crisis on the island this should only be done on the day before the first function is to take place in a building and where possible the water should be caught and used on the garden. Where this is impossible the taps should still be run as the priority is to avoid the risk of infection.
9. At the two united celebration services an offering will be received for Circuit Funds. This will save the complication of dividing it up and also help to boost circuit funds following the suspension of the assessment for the last quarter of the year.

Pastoral visiting.

Pastoral visits can now resume, however, please ring the person you intend to visit beforehand, in order to ascertain that they are happy to receive a visit. Please also keep a note of the time and date of the visit for 21 days for tracking purposes.

With regard to lettings and other functions on church premises:

These can recommence from the **22nd of June** so long as your minister and the District Office have been informed that the above requirements have been met.

In addition to the requirements above, where the event is an outside letting, it will be necessary to have an undertaking from the person responsible for the letting that they will follow government guidance in terms of hand hygiene etc as described above.

None of the above means that chapels have to reopen their doors.

Where people wish to be more cautious reopening can be delayed until they feel comfortable to do this.

Our reopening plan is obviously dependent on there being no change to government advice and no upsurge in infections following the relaxing of the lockdown.