



18<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear members and everyone in our wider fellowship,

### **Limited Reopening of Battle Baptist Church from 1<sup>st</sup> April**

There will be three services over the Easter weekend, which will be broadcast online as usual:

Maundy Thursday Communion (01/04)	7.30pm
Good Friday gathering (02/04)	10.30am
Easter Day celebration (04/04)	10.30am

People who would like to attend in person may now book a place in advance, as the Trustees have agreed to reopen the church for worship in a limited, COVID-secure way. Subject to the status of the pandemic and any changes in current advice from Government and the Baptist Union, people may book to attend regular Sunday services from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

The reasons for the Trustees' decision are as follows:

- Attending a place of worship in a COVID-secure way continues to be legal, even in national lockdown.
- On 22<sup>nd</sup> February, the Government set out its 'roadmap': a timetable for the easing of restrictions over the coming months. As a result of this, the Baptist Union withdrew its recommendation that Baptist churches remain closed.
- Lockdown has led to a dramatic decline in the number of COVID-19 cases locally: last week there were 10 cases per 100k in Rother, whereas back in January it was over 700.
- The vaccination programme means that those who are most vulnerable to serious illness with the virus (those over 70 years of age and those with underlying health conditions) have received their first dose. People in their fifties are currently able to book appointments for vaccination.
- Sufficient measures have been put in place at the church to reduce the risk of spread of the virus.
- Gatherings will be managed by identifiable members of the fellowship ('stewards') who will encourage those attending to follow the protocols in place so that meeting for worship remains COVID-secure.

The risk of someone falling seriously ill from COVID-19 remains high because of the nature of the virus, but by following COVID-secure protocols it is possible to minimise this risk and to open the church in a safe way.

There are some over-arching principles affecting attendance that will not be surprising to anyone:

- Please do not attend if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had them in the past 14 days.

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**Registered Charity number: 1134288**



- We ask that everyone who attends takes personal responsibility to follow Government guidance on self-isolation and to engage with the NHS Test and Trace system.
- We ask people who are clinically vulnerable to consider carefully whether they should attend (unless they are fully vaccinated).

I set out below all the measures that everyone must agree to comply with in order to keep our premises safe. The list is long, but it is important.

#### Control Measures that will be in place to keep BBC COVID-secure

1. People attending church will be asked to sit in a socially distanced way, and to remain seated during worship.
2. Trustees have set the maximum capacity of the chapel at 30 and the Manna House at 24: this will vary depending on how many household bubbles attend. For example, we can seat 24 people in the Manna House if at least 8 of them are in bubbles and are therefore able to sit next to each other: this number drops to 16 if all those attending are from different households. Maximum capacity numbers are subject to review.
3. People will need to book a seat at a service in advance so that the seating arrangements can be planned: details of how to do this will follow.
4. Whilst at church, everyone **must**:
  - a. wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth whilst in worship: this is a legal requirement. The only exemption applies to those who are presenting at the front;
  - b. sanitise / wash hands on entry;
  - c. remain socially distanced from people outside of their household: this means staying 2 metres apart ideally, or 1m apart when wearing a mask;
  - d. abide by the protocols for using the loos: only one person in the Manna House toilets at any one time; wipe down the loos with the anti-bacterial wipes provided after use; wash your hands thoroughly (20 seconds);
  - e. keep their coats with them: please do not hang up on the coat pegs;
5. Whilst at church, everyone **must not**:
  - a. sing (even behind your mask);
  - b. use Bibles or other books kept at the church – please bring your own;
  - c. linger on the premises to chat with friends – please move outside where the risk of spread of the virus is greatly reduced.
  - d. engage in physical contact with anyone from a different household or bubble;

Stewards will ask worshippers if they have symptoms on arrival and will manage staggered entry into the buildings. We will keep a record of who has attended which service and of who sat where – in line with Government guidelines and data protection protocols. Windows will be open during services to promote good ventilation. At the end of services, stewards will ask worshippers to leave the premises row by row.

Please be reassured that the premises are being cleaned thoroughly by our cleaning staff, who pay particular attention to common ‘touch points’. The church is investing in a ‘fogging machine’ which will allow us to disinfect spaces that have been used effectively, negating the need for a period of ‘quarantine’ between uses.

Clearly all services will continue to be broadcast online. Ed, Emma, and others involved in leading worship will continue to address the cameras at this point. The Baptist Union advise that congregational singing is

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not likely to be permitted until 21<sup>st</sup> June at the earliest: we are on a very gradual, three-month long road out of restrictions. Nonetheless, we welcome the opportunity to meet together in whatever way we can.

Please do get in touch if you have any questions about anything in this letter. I will update you on how to book your seat at a service very soon.

'Let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.' (Col 3:15 (NLT))

Yours in Christ,

Jo Reeves  
Church Administrator  
Battle Baptist Church.

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