

Update on plans at Plymouth Christian Centre

6 June 2020

Dear Church Family

I hope you are keeping well.

We have been missing you all!

I wanted to take the opportunity to write to you and to update you on our plans to resume worship in the church building.

Thank you

First of all, I want to say a very big thank you to all those who have responded in many different ways to the challenges of this pandemic and the unusual and difficult circumstances we have found ourselves in. Many of you have helped and served and given and contributed and encouraged and looked after one another. Whether on the technological front, financial giving, pastoral care, practical help, or numerous other small and hidden ways – once again we have been very blessed and encouraged by the ministry of our church family.

So thank you!

What are our plans for the coming weeks and months?

We are currently guided by two authorities:

- 1) The government
- 2) Our denominational oversight at Elim, under the leadership of Chris Cartwright, our General Superintendent, and the National Leadership Team

Both of these have given instructions and guidelines for places of worship.

Current guidelines allow for up to 30 people to meet in the building, allowing for social distancing of 2m, or 1m with additional safeguarding measures.

Singing is not allowed.

Additional stringent requirements are in place for any use of the building, including deep cleaning regimes, mask wearing, one-way systems etc.

We have had to complete a 32-page risk assessment for our denominational oversight to begin to plan for a return to worship.

The current advice of our headquarters is to continue to prepare for a return to the building, however not to rush this, as the requirements are very stringent and limiting at the moment.

Our thinking remains that the conditions are not yet in place for a meaningful return to the building. Thirty people, wearing masks, unable to sing, unable to properly greet each other, unable to take communion, unable to drink coffee – would not be a good or uplifting way to meet. And this is without dealing with the challenges of children's and youth work, and other logistical and safety measures.

As I said on Sunday, the landscape is evolving rapidly. We can only see a little way ahead, as if we were driving at night with our full beam on. Our planning is currently in increments of 6-8 weeks. Our intention at the moment is therefore to stay online until at least early September. In early September, we will review the legislation and instructions from our denominational oversight and will then decide what the next steps will be and whether we can facilitate any meaningful gatherings in the building.

In August, some of the staff team will also be taking a well-deserved holiday. Youth and Children's provision will continue in some format, with weekly opportunities to connect with each other and the Children's and Youth teams.

Our online services, while limited in some ways, have provided us with a creative and meaningful way to connect together. This has been supplemented by online Alpha, Encounter at Home, community groups meeting by Zoom, Youth and Children's online offerings and other creative initiatives, the prayer centre supporting each other on WhatsApp, the Love thy Neighbour initiative, Freedom Encounters course, and the work of the pastoral team and the wider church looking after each other.

We continue to be church – even if we can't physically meet together in the traditional way!

What is allowed are groups of up to six people meeting outside, or two different households meeting inside, so we encourage you as groups and individuals to think creatively how you might meet up in person throughout the summer period to renew fellowship and encourage one another in person.

This experience has certainly tested our resolve and our patience, but we will come through this and we will meet again soon!

I will provide you with further updates as these become available.

Please feel free to get in touch if you have any questions or queries or feedback.

Wishing you God's richest blessing, strength, encouragement, and endurance!

Geoff and the team at PCC