



# **St. Cuthbert's** The Church by the Sea

August 2020

Dear friends,

This has been a year that many of us might wish to put behind us, but it is likely to be a year that we will never forget! 2020 has been the year when we thought 'Brexit' would fill the news, but instead found Covid-19 dominating our thoughts and actions.

We are looking forward to re-opening our church building, having followed the Scottish Government and Church of Scotland guidelines about **minimising risk through good practice in cleaning and social distancing.**

Our Kirk Session and Congregational Board have been working through the Planning Team to prepare the building for our opening on **Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August at 10.45 a.m.**

You may already know some of the restrictions imposed on us by government, but here we share with you some of the changes we will notice when we gather for congregational worship.

The maximum number of people allowed in church buildings is 50. This includes the minister, organist, and stewards. That means there is space for 44 adults and children in the sanctuary.

The stewards on duty will open the doors for you, refer you to the hand sanitiser gel, and guide you to assigned seating at the correct distancing of 2 metres. We are required to keep a record of names and phone numbers of those present in case "Test and Protect" procedures need to be followed, so please be prepared to give the elder on duty these details.

There will be a one-way system in operation, with assigned seats being filled from the front, and then exiting from the rear.

It is now mandatory to wear a face covering while inside the building unless you have medical reasons for not doing so.

The minister and reader will be allowed to remove theirs while talking but must ensure we are at least 2 metres away from the nearest person in the pews.

The halls will remain closed for the foreseeable future so there will be no creche or Sunday School available. Instead, each service will be 'family friendly' and children will be most welcome. Instead of a sermon there will be a short 'Thought for the Day' or 'Informal Time' appropriate to all ages.

Sadly, we are not allowed to sing as it is thought that this increases the risk of an extended range of vapour droplets! However, we will enjoy some organ music, alongside prayers and Bible readings.

There will be no coffee or tea after the service, so any chatting will need to take place outside the building – again keeping at a 'safe' distance from people from other households.

On a practical note – as the halls are shut, there will only be one toilet open – next to the vestry. However, as the service will be shorter than usual, this should be manageable!

As we come back into our church building, we realise that the restrictions imposed will make this a changed experience for us all. We will be on a steep learning curve! As brothers and sisters in Christ we will co-operate with each other and be understanding of the challenges we all face as we seek to create a safe and encouraging place in which to worship God.

To assist our initial planning, it would be helpful if you would let your elder know if you intend to be back in St. Cuthbert's for worship on Sunday.

**It is important that you make the choice that is right for you after considering your own risk factors.** The Church of Scotland has included in its Guidance Document an "Assessment Tool" which you might find useful. It can be found on their website, and there will also be copies available in the vestibule. Please note this is something to inform your own judgment and is not something you need to submit to us.

If you are feeling more cautious about returning at this time, I invite you to look on our church website for copies of the prayers and / or messages from the Sunday services so that, even if you are unable to be present in person, you will be one with your church family in spirit.

Whatever your choice, I pray God's blessing on you and your families.

*Sarah Nicol.*