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Coronavirus update

Dear friends and family of KBC,

I hope this finds you well! 'Freedom Day' as it has been billed by some newspapers has arrived and with it the lifting of many restrictions in regards to COVID. It is a long awaited date that ushers in a new phase of our response to COVID and seeking to keep people safe. I for one am thrilled with some of the changes this means for us - the joy of sung worship together from Sunday, the ability to meet in person in Small Groups from September and no longer needing to book to come to church from the 1 August 2021.

However, even though we will be adopting some changes from this Sunday, as a Leadership team we are still taking a cautious approach in our desire to keep people safe. We met on Monday night to discuss the impact of the government's lifting of legal restrictions and what this will mean for us as a fellowship. Indeed, I do not think there has been a meeting over the last 15 months where we have not discussed some aspect of the impact of COVID. Monday, though, was more difficult because we found ourselves needing to make decisions outside of the context of legal restrictions which the government had put in place. In some respects the decision making process was easier when the guidance was definite. As we prayerfully considered our response, with the desire to create a safe environment for people to come and worship, we were acutely aware that the process of making these decisions will be divisive. Many of us will be longing for a freer approach and others will be keen to take a more cautious approach to Sundays.

This reality, however, presents us with a unique opportunity, to live out our faith and take personal responsibility for one another as begin to live with COVID. It is an opportunity to look not only to our own needs and interests but to the needs of others (Philippians 2:4). It is an opportunity to be imitators of God and practice a life of love expressed in sacrifice and preference for others (Ephesians 5:1-2). It is an opportunity for us to be humble and gentle, to bear with one another in love and to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3-4). How might God shape us, I wonder, in our love for Him and for our faith family as we work together and respond positively to this next phase of COVID?

So what has been decided?

There are a number of factors that we considered on Monday as we move forward, but two thoughts have informed our thinking: keep thinking of others; and the government's expectation and recommendation that face masks are to be worn inside crowded spaces.

In reaching a decision the Leadership team have taken the following into account:

- As a fellowship we have a responsibility to protect one another and those who serve and volunteer sacrificially among us.
- Some members remain nervous about returning to worship with us or are anxious about the removal of the legal restrictions.
- Others welcome the day to worship without any restrictions, including not wearing a mask.
- Infection rates have been increasing and remain high.
- Good air circulation helps reduce transmission.
- Maintaining safe distancing helps to reduce transmission.
- Singing increases the risk of aerosol transmission.

In the light of this, we propose to take both sensible and appropriate measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 and protect our brothers and sisters in Christ and in particular those who are vulnerable. So, we will:

- Expect **everyone to use face coverings** when in the building.
- Maintain a **good safe distance** between the rows but allow those who wish to sit next to others to do so.
- Continue to **maintain a careful hygiene** routine with leaders for each activity required to clean those areas commonly touched such as handles and switches.
- **Avoid the use of shared objects** such as Bibles and continue to ask stewards to serve communion rather than passing round a communion trays/baskets.
- Continue to open the windows and **ventilate the building**.
- **Serve just tea and coffee** from behind a counter ie without biscuits.
- **Remove the need to book a place**, so that once again we are free to attend as we wish, which has inhibited some.

In taking personal responsibility for others, we ask that you:

- **Sanitise your hands** as you enter the building you.
- **Wear a mask** when in the building.
- **Avoid physical contact** such as handshakes and hugs.
- **Be mindful** of those who are still anxious for example, respect their desire to have a seat between them and you, or when outside wear a mask when speaking to someone who wants to wear a mask themselves.
- **Stay for fellowship** and refreshments between the services but we encourage you to engage with just a few people rather than everyone.

While infection rates remain high we will continue with these measures, but as we have done throughout the pandemic we will review these measures at our next Leadership Meeting on the 6th September 2021.

We hope that by taking a cautious and considered approach it will provide confidence to those currently attending who may have become anxious about the removal of legal restrictions, give confidence to others about returning, whilst providing the beginning of small steps and the start of returning to a more recognised way of worshipping for all of us who are yearning for a freer approach.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Grace be with you.

Stu