

Opening Safe Church

On 29th June, I took part in the 2nd Bishop's Forum, which was dedicated to the discussion of how best to implement the PHO's recommendations for opening up worship services across the Province.

Dr Bonnie Henry's update stated:-

- No further restrictions on in-church services as of July 1st - this means;
- No distancing required
- No masks required
- Singing is permissible
- Communion may be taken
- Coffee may be had in halls afterwards

Unsurprisingly, the diocese felt that such a dramatic change from previous restrictions would be a step too far, and sought to restrain such moves from its parishes by introducing certain 'Considerations for Reopening', which, in medical terms made little sense and flew in the face of the PHO's recommendations.

Without getting into the nuts and bolts of the discussion / debate / argument, most of us came away with the impression that each parish should use its own common sense as the 'one size fits all' approach is simply not applicable to such a diverse and disparate demographic.

With this in mind, the Wardens and I have decided on a pragmatic approach, allowing each parishioner to use their own common sense, and be sensitive and considerate of others who may have a different 'take' or comfort zone.

So, from 11th July, we will be opening up our church and hall for in-person services, though whether we have the first service in the hall or church is not certain as yet. This will depend on whether we have the requisite technology to function as we would wish,

so that those who are still uncomfortable attending church in person may still zoom at home.

Further, we are more than happy for those who would like to attend but are still a little anxious about removing their masks at this time, to please feel free to come along. No-one is going to rip the mask from your face!

As a concession to the diocese, I will only be offering communion in one kind for the present (wafers only, and gluten-free for those who prefer).

Another concession is that we will be offering refreshments after the service in the hall, but the beverages will be served in disposable cups until we have more volunteers to help with galley duties.

That said, we have a need for more folk to help in many ways - and more so now that we are opening up, and it is summer time when many people like to head out into the bundu. This leaves us with a small remnant of faithful stalwarts who have to shoulder the weight of all the parish jobs, the result of which can be overwhelming at times.

What we do not need is an exodus of this elite cadre, but an expansion of the 'Green Berets' to help. If you feel you have what it takes to roll up your sleeves and do some basic tasks, then you will be made most welcome. (Chocolate chip cookies may be used as an incentive if you're lucky!)

As a prelude - and who doesn't like a prelude? - we will be needing a cleaning party to smarten up the hall and church, and chase out the resident gophers, dassies, mfezi - (Mozambique Spitting Cobra), and bush pigs that may be hiding in the buildings. If required in an emergency, Gracie may be called in to deal with the bush pigs and venomous snakes to save you the trouble and supplement her diet.

On a more serious note, I would ask that those of you who would like to attend church on 11th July in person, please give your names to either Lynn (People's Warden) or myself, so that we can arrange the seating appropriately in whichever venue (church or hall) we decide to use.

The zoom service will continue as before, but I hope as many of you as feel comfortable will come and 'make church' with us. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on YOU to make sure that you do YOUR OWN HEALTH CHECK before attending. If you are in any way unwell - keep it to yourself please and stay away until you are fully recovered; we don't want your bugs, however generous you are feeling. If you're feeling fine but would be more comfortable wearing a mask - then come with one and we'll score you for design originality. Those attending should have had both their vaccinations and be at least 2 weeks post the second jab. If you are a determined 'non-vaxxer', then please contact me first before coming to church.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Ginny and Lynn - our two Wardens, and Graham - our tech guru, for making all these events possible. In whatever way you can, please come and make church with us and enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Hambani Khale,

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