

Portree Church of Scotland: The New Normal

After 6½ months of enforced closure since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 our dear church reopened for worship on Sunday 04 October.



Before this could take place, we had to ensure that all Scottish Government regulations and Church of Scotland Guidelines were implemented. All these requirements were discussed at great length at several Zoom meetings of the Kirk Session and at a further meeting in the church where our agreed procedures were “road tested”



We all owe a great debt of gratitude to the Session for its attention to detail in the agreeing of arrangements and to Norman Bruce in particular for his socially distanced seating pattern in the church which allows us to accommodate the maximum permitted number of worshippers, and the strategic positioning of hand sanitising materials. Those Elders involved in stewarding arrangements are also to be thanked.



We are now required to keep a register with phone numbers of all who attend services, and this is done as we enter the church, one name per family.



In addition to the social distancing at services all should be aware that the whole church building is completely cleaned and sanitised before and after each service.

As those who have attended any of these services will tell you, church services are not quite as we remember them from the start of the year. For this reason, we now publish a set of photographs, taken by Ronald MacDonald, showing some of the procedures which have been put in place for your safety.



We hope that by detailing the major changes that we have required to make and the steps that have been taken to ensure that the church is as safe as we can make it, anyone who had doubts about returning to church should feel reassured.



CHURCH REOPENING:

From Sunday 04 October 2020, 11 am

The Church of Scotland has advised all congregations about how we can open safely. We are following these guidelines.

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| When? | We restarted Sunday morning services on 4 October 2020 |
| Arrival | You will be asked to use the small gate and the mobility access; and follow the markers to ensure social distancing. |
| Vestibule | You will be expected to wear a mask while in the building; and use the hand sanitiser in the vestibule entering and leaving the building. |
| Sanctuary | You will be asked for your name and a contact phone number at every service. Only one name will be needed for couples/families. You will be able to give your offering before you are seated – there will be no collection taken during the service. |
| Seating | You will be instructed where to sit by a steward. The pews have been set out for social distancing, so it is quite likely you may find yourself sitting by yourself in a pew. The front pews are marked for individuals. Couples and family groups will be seated towards the back of the church. |
| Service | There will not be any singing. Intimations/Readings/Instructions will be up on the wall via projector rather than on paper. The minister will conduct the service from the pulpit. You will be asked to remain seated at the end of the service until instructed to leave by the stewards. |
| Leaving the church | If you are at the back of the church, you will be asked to leave by the main door and the mobility access. If you are seated to the front of the church, you will be asked to leave through the vestry and round the back of the church to the main gate. Hand sanitiser will be available for your use on exiting the building. |
| Other info | There will be no toilet facilities available. You are asked not attend church if you have any Covid 19 symptoms, have tested positive for Covid 19, or have been asked to self-isolate due to contact with anyone who has tested positive. |
| Church Capacity | The numbers we can accommodate are limited and the Scottish Government has imposed a maximum of 50 people in attendance. If numbers exceed that then you may not be admitted if the church is already full and a booking system may have to be put in place but to date that hasn't been required. |