Seventh-day Adventist® Church

24th December 2021

Statement to churches on current COVID-19 situation

Dear pastors and church family,

As of today, in total there are currently 144,284 new daily symptomatic cases of COVID in the UK on average, based on PCR and LFT test data from up to three days ago, an increase of 66% from 87,131 reported last week. A difference of 57,153 in a week is the largest jump in cases since March 2020. Cases are now rising in all the regions of the UK. The epidemiology of the Omicron variant seems to suggest this will be a more intense and sharp transmission profile than Alpha or Delta but shorter in duration. There will most probably be a peak around the first or second week of January.

Therefore, in consultation with the NEC COVID-19 advisory committee, the NEC administration believes it would be reasonable and appropriate to limit collective worship to beyond that timeframe, at least until the end of January, when more data is available. It means a transition to online worship and limited personal contact is strongly advised for all churches and gatherings.

However, we respect the individual context and needs of every church, which is why churches may make the decision to remain open in a limited capacity. If so, please make sure these points are followed:

1. The risk assessment must be up to date and ***ALL*** requirements fulfilled. The risk assessment is not optional, and the requirements are not recommendations.

Question: ***Who is liable if churches remain open?***
If the risk assessment is up to date, the decision to remain open may be made under extreme care. The venue manager/pastor/church board are responsible for the implementation of all regulations.

2. Government guidance must be followed (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship). For now, face coverings are mandatory, exceptions only for those with a valid medical exemption which must be shown to the ushers. Potlucks and other gatherings where face coverings are not worn should not take place. Ventilation through open doors and windows must be guaranteed. Attendance should be limited, so that social distancing between members that are not of the same household is possible (at least 1m to all sides between household bubbles).

Question: ***Can midweek community projects, communion, baptisms, and baby dedications take place?***
Under the current circumstances, it is recommended to limit all activities to a minimum.

3. Although checks for a COVID pass (which proves either vaccination status or the latest PCR/lateral flow test result) will not be required on entry, worshippers should take a free lateral flow test a maximum of 24h before attending church.

Question: ***What if attendees do not want to comply?***
A COVID pass is not required, however, face coverings are mandated by law.

4. Recommendation to work from home, if possible, applies also to church and pastoral staff – visitation should take place under extreme care, wearing a mask, taking a lateral flow test before visiting, and if possible, outdoors or on the doorstep. Guidance on key elements of worship has already been published (https://youtu.be/aulYPuFluXM).

Question: ***Can pastors still carry out visits?***
Yes, under extreme care, when necessary.

Please be aware that around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. This means they could be spreading the virus without knowing it. The most important symptoms are no longer a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell. For most people, an Omicron positive case will feel much more like the common cold, starting with a sore throat, runny nose, and a headache. The holiday season is a time we are reminded of Christ's love for us. Let us show love and care towards each other and make sure nobody is left behind, left out, or forgotten.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection#contents

Prepare for a time when you might have to self-isolate so create household bubbles, online groups, and telephone checks for the vulnerable. Support each other through prayer. Show your support for pastors, elders, ushers, and other church staff who are doing their best to keep you safe – hold them in esteem and help them to implement the best possible safety measures.

This is not a time of fear, but a time of joy! This is a season not for the spirit of discord, but of love! This is a time not to be lax, but to be prepared! This is a time we must put others' needs above our needs. The Lord will see us through.

In His service,



Pastor Emanuel Bran

On behalf of NEC administrators and the Health Department