

Seventh-day Adventist® Church

NORTH ENGLAND CONFERENCE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

RSJ/yjc

18 January 2021

Dear NEC Church Family

RE: COVID-19 AND RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES

As we enter into 2021, it cannot be missed that we continue to need our Lord's guiding hand now more than ever before.

Although many may have hoped that a new year would have brought with it an end to the tight lockdown restrictions and the ability to return to some semblance of "normal", it cannot be ignored that globally we are facing a tougher pandemic than in March 2020.

As was evident from our last letter to you all on this matter dated 22 December 2021, it was our hope to be able to re-open the North England Conference (NEC) churches for face to face worship as soon as possible however, in light of the latest traction of COVID-19 this is not possible.

Whilst we are aware that the Government's guidelines during this current lockdown do permit some face to face church services to take place it is the decision of the North England Conference that face-to-face worship services cannot resume at this time.

In the spring of 2020, specifically 21 April 2020, the number of persons in the United Kingdom who died as a result of COVID-19 was 1,224. On 13 January 2021, the number of persons in the United Kingdom who died as a result of COVID-19 was 1,564. This is a stark reminder that the situation our country is now in, as a result of the pandemic, is worse than last year and we must all do our part to ensure the health and wellbeing of our family, church family, key workers and community.

We have taken the decision not to re-open the NEC churches at this time for face-to-face worship for the following reasons;

1. The increase in COVID-19 related deaths so that the death rate is higher than that of spring 2020
2. The increase in the COVID-19 infection rate
3. The vulnerability of the NEC demographic due to ethnicity and age
4. A substantial number of the NEC Church Family are key workers and a return to face to face worship puts them, their families, those they care for and their colleagues at risk
5. The Governments restrictions of travel - many members of the NEC Church Family travel over the 5 miles permitted by the Government for travel, to attend their church for worship.



6. In line with the Government's guidelines, those attending congregations for worship can only do so in their family or support bubbles and once there they cannot interact with any other persons thus preventing from taking place the style and custom of worship which the NEC churches enjoy
7. The emergence of a second and potentially third strain of COVID-19 - We are aware that the second strain has been identified as more transmittable than the first

It is our desire for the NEC church family to be able to worship in a way that promotes holistic health, wellbeing and spiritual upliftment. Sadly, this is not possible at the moment.

We are aware that throughout the pandemic some congregations have provided services to their community, which have included foodbanks and warm meals. As long as these services are provided in line with the current Government guidelines, we are content for these services to continue.

In addition to this, we are aware that some churches have utilised their church buildings to pre-record or live stream services according to the strict Government guidelines. Again, we are content for this to continue.

Furthermore, weddings, funerals and baptisms can continue to take place but only in line with the Government guidelines, which limit attendance and activities.

We are committed to keeping the position of the re-opening of the NEC churches for face-to-face worship under review. Therefore, we can confirm that following the Government's review at the end of January, we will also conduct a review of our decision.

We will communicate any change to our decision to you as soon as possible. In the meantime we ask that we continue to do our part in not only preserving our own health and wellbeing but also that of our family, community, colleagues and church family.

For many of us this is a lonely and testing time, however be encouraged just as we are that...*"he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold"* – Job 23:10.

Yours sincerely



Pastor Richard Jackson
Pastor & President
Extending God's Kingdom – Nurturing Each Other and Winning Another