

# St. Peter's Catholic Church

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19th June 2020.

Dear Parishioner,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and cheerful in these difficult times of lockdown.

It has been too long since we last met. This has been for me a cause of sadness and a time of great frustration at not being able to provide the full pastoral care you deserve. The Scottish Government decides when and what we can do based on sound medical advice to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone. We respect their decisions and follow them strictly because it is only by working together that we can find the best way to co-exist with this awful and deadly virus.

I am writing this letter to you to keep you informed and updated on what has been called 'The Route Map' to unlocking, and, to explain what impact it will have on the Catholic community. At the moment I am making contact with all known parishioners - using the current data base and the parish website to do so. Unfortunately, not all parishioners have registered or have access to the internet. Therefore, I ask you please to help me by reaching out to your family, friends and neighbours who are parishioners to let them know what is happening and encourage them to get in touch by completing and returning the enclosed registration form.

Covid-19 continues to dictate and control our lives; it will do so for the foreseeable future. Our lives will never be the same again. The Church has to change and adapt in new and innovative ways to provide an effective and meaningful ministry to its members. This will require the co-operation of everyone and the goodwill of each parishioner to actively engage in a process that will provide our own 'Route Map' to future provision. We need to create and sustain a safe environment for worship in readiness for when we are granted permission to open our churches for the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments. We can achieve this by working together to plan and prepare for the re-opening of the church.

The Scottish Government is following a 'Route Map' with four clear and distinct phases for complete unlocking. For the purpose of keeping people safe and easing the burden on our health service, all citizens are compelled to follow the instructions identified in each phase of unlocking. Our Diocese fully endorses compliance with the Government's guidelines.

- Phase 1:** **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March.**  
Our church buildings were closed.
- Phase 2:** **From Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June.**  
Funeral Masses may be celebrated in the Diocese of Paisley. The maximum permitted congregation is 12 people and appropriate stewarding and sanitation measures must be in place.  
**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June and Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July.**  
Churches may be opened for personal prayer provided appropriate stewarding and sanitation are in place.  
**From Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July.**  
Churches may be opened on weekdays for personal prayer, provided that appropriate stewarding and sanitation measures are in place.
- Phase 3:** **At a date yet to be decided.**  
Places of worship open to extended groups subject to physical distancing and hygiene safeguards.  
Relaxation of restrictions to attendance at funerals and marriages beyond close family.
- Phase 4:** **At a date to be decided.**  
Mass gatherings resume in line with public health advice.  
All ceremonies can take place, with improved hygiene and other precautions.

The timeline to complete unlocking is uncertain and a return to some semblance of 'normal' unclear. Every three weeks the First Minister will decide whether it is safe to remain or move to the next Phase to unlocking. At every stage the Diocese will be guided by Bishop John and the Bishops' Conference of Scotland on how to implement the Scottish Government's 'Route Map'. To assist in this regard, Bishop John has appointed Mgr. Gerry Gallagher as delegate for monitoring Infection Control and Fr. Paul Brady as delegate for Pastoral Ministry. Throughout the period of transition we will be guided by their wisdom and implement their decisions.

This past week, the members of the Parish Pastoral Council have been reading and reflecting on a document I sent them with a summary of all important information received thus far: from the Scottish Government; the Bishops' Conference of Scotland; Bishop John; the Diocesan Delegates; as well as my own thoughts and proposals for moving forward with our own parish 'Route Map'. I value their opinions and seek their wisdom in making the right decisions for our parish - as we plan and prepare for a return to the church for Mass and the Sacraments - by creating a safe environment for worship in a way that is easily managed and sustainable. The consultation will be ongoing until we are satisfied we have everything in place for good practice that will ensure the safety and wellbeing of all who choose to come to celebrate the liturgy with us.

The advice from Council members, at this initial stage, is that we should move slowly and cautiously by opening the church for worship only when we have all required health and safety measures in place: all parishioners are registered; appropriate safeguarding is in place; we have the necessary groups established and trained; we are assured that parishioners are fully informed of and familiar with the proper and correct procedures for safe distancing; and appropriate stewarding and sanitation measures are firmly in place. This process will be time consuming in administration, recruitment, training and management - if we are to lay the foundation for a lasting and successful route back to being together again in church.

Our focus, first and foremost, must be on planning and preparing for our return to the church for Mass and the celebration of the Sacraments. We need to ensure that we have the right plan in place that will keep us safe and instil confidence in the measures we will put in place. Your help in this regard is essential and your willingness to take an active part in the process is gratefully appreciated.

The immediate priority is to update the parish data base and recruit volunteers for a number of groups required to assist with safe distancing and proper sanitation before we can access the church.

### **Parish Registration**

**These details are protected by the data Protection Act and kept securely in the presbytery.**

It is important that all who choose to be a member of the parish community complete and return the appropriate form. All sections of the form are included for very good reason and should be completed. The advantage in having this information is to keep an accurate record of the number of households in the parish and to help improve communication between the parish and the home on important matters of personal and communal interest.

When we return to the church we are required to keep a safe distance of two metres. From my calculations, it means that the minimum number of seats available is 44. This number will increase with couples and immediate families sitting together. The exact number will only be known by introducing a 'ticket scheme' to manage the number of parishioners wishing to attend. On average, 220 people attend St. Peter's for Mass at the weekend. To accommodate this number we would possibly require an additional Mass on a Sunday at 12.15. However, certain groups of parishioners may not be able to return to church because of restrictions imposed by the Scottish Government for their health and safety. This will probably mean that fewer than 220 seats will be required. Only when I have all the Registration forms returned will I know the number of seats and Masses required.

### **Appropriate Stewarding and Sanitation measures**

We are required to recruit volunteers to assist with the management of people and sanitation before and after using the church. Parishioners between the ages of 18 and 70 are asked to choose one or more groups in which they would be happy to assist. The more volunteers we have, the time required will be reduced.

### ***Hospitality Group – Welcoming, inspection and instruction***

Volunteers in this group will be responsible for welcoming parishioners and checking they have a ticket. They would also check that they have a face mask on (masks will be provided if required) and instruct them to use the hand sanitiser before entering the building and to do so again when they leave. They will also ask them to enter the church by the door on the right and follow the instructions of the pass-keepers.

### ***Pass-keepers – Directing***

The pass-keepers will direct traffic along the 'one-way system' and point them in the direction of their seat. They will also direct parishioners to and from the Sanctuary for Holy Communion. At the end of Mass, they will direct everyone, row by row, to leave the church in an orderly manner along the 'one-way system' out by the door on the right (beside the toilet). Clear and visible signage will be in place to help show the route to be followed and to remind parishioners to keep a safe distance of 2 metres.

### ***Cleaning Services – Hygiene***

This group requires many volunteers to cover Masses on a rota basis. The more people we have the less time is required to clean. Anyone taking a seat, if not exempt for health or other reasons, will be encouraged to join a team from the Mass they attend each week. All PPE material/equipment will be provided. It is hoped that each team will have four members to undertake a meticulous clean of the church lasting no more than 30 minutes.

### ***First Aid***

Parishioners who are nurses or trained in First Aid will be recruited to assist parishioners in distress or emergency health situations (using PPE) as and when required.

In conclusion, I ask you please to work with me in doing all that is required so that we can get back to church well prepared and ready to celebrate the Liturgy in a safe and clean environment. This can only be achieved with your full and active co-operation. In whatever way you choose to get involved, I want you to know that I am truly grateful and thank you most sincerely on behalf of your fellow parishioners for caring and taking seriously your responsibility to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

**Please complete your registration form providing all the information requested and return it to me before next Sunday.**

I will keep you updated throughout.

God bless you and your family. Keep well and stay safe!

**Canon Edward D Cameron  
Parish Priest**