

Back to worship base – make it a safe space!

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD!” (Psalm 122:1)

9 July 2021. Finally, after more than 15 months worshipping online, we have now been granted permission to hold our English-language worship “back at base” in the Pauluskirche in the Bochum City, starting Sunday 11 July.

As I write this, the Covid-19 incidence figure for Bochum (the number of new infections per 100,000 persons) is only 3.7 and has been below 10 since mid-June. Figures are similarly low throughout our area, so the NRW government has again revised its *Coronaschutzverordnung* (Covid protection rules), introducing a new Incidence Level 0, effective from today. Within the coming week, the Church of Westphalia will be revising its recommendations for worship to include this new category, most probably giving greater freedom for forms of indoor worship. Until these revised recommendations are issued, however, the **following conditions continue to apply**:

In church, you will be asked to fill out a “green card” (with basic tracing information, which will be treated confidentially and destroyed after a period of 4 weeks). The card also informs you of the basic rules that apply during worship and while you are in the church building:

- STAY HEALTHY!** And if you do feel unwell, stay home and “Get well soon” so as to avoid putting others at risk.
- STAND APART!** Please keep the statutory distance of 1.5 metres to other worshippers who are not members of your household.
- KEEP CLEAN!** Please disinfect your hands using the hand-disinfection dispenser when entering and leaving church.
- HANDS OFF!** Shaking hands is sadly not possible. Let’s think instead of other creative ways to greet each other and share peace!
- MASKS ON!** OP or FFP2 masks must be worn when moving around in church, and should also be kept on once you are seated.
- MASKED SINGERS!** Health experts advise that there’s a heightened risk of aerosol-infection when singing, so please also keep your OP or FFP2 mask on while singing the hymns.

In spite of these restrictions, we hope to be able to create a worshipful atmosphere, and it will be a delight to actually worship in each other’s 3D presence rather than only as so many 2D faces on a screen! We aim to keep you updated on changes as they occur.

(Pastor) *Jimmy Brown*