



Seymour Street Methodist

How We Responded
to Covid-19

Like every church across MCI, Seymour Street has had to rethink virtually everything about our approach to mission and ministry in the light of Covid-19. As lockdown was introduced and it became obvious that recorded services would be one of the ways in which we could continue in worship, we decided that the 6 churches on the Lisburn and Dromore Circuit would work collaboratively.

Week by week, one of our ministers and the church families they were responsible for recorded components to build a service and our amazing tech team produced videos which included lockdown choirs and praise bands; circuit Sunday School and Youth services; and which celebrated Easter and Pentecost. One of the frequently remarked consequences has been a sense of unity of purpose and friendship across our circuit.

From the outset of the crisis, Seymour Street sought to respond to the practical needs of those in the congregation and community which was coordinated through our community outreach service, Damask. Our advice service was extended by a day per week and a team of volunteers helped distribute food parcels to those at risk in partnership with Lisburn & Castlereagh Council and Lisburn Foodbank. Damask were presented with a special award by our Mayor for their work throughout lockdown. Our partners, Youth Initiatives, found safe ways to continue their detached work with young people on the streets and to run a Summer Programme in our carpark.

Communication has been key throughout, making use of social media to convey information as share 'This Time Tomorrow' video stories from a range of people across the congregation. Weekly emails with information and devotional content, alongside monthly letters and service sheets to those without internet access have been vital, combined with pastoral contact from our staff team and class leaders.

The decision to return to worship in our church buildings was another circuit decision, with most congregations recommencing gathered worship from Sunday the 5th August. Seymour Street had been live streaming the morning service each week for over a year now, but the fact that such a small number of socially distanced worshippers can be accommodated in the building (around 60) has obviously meant that a much larger portion of our congregation are worshipping in this way. As a result we have upgraded our camera system in the past weeks and sought to encourage as great a sense as possible of worshipping as one body, both gathered and at home. Audio services continue to be available by telephone to those without Regulations permitting, we plan to run our socially distanced 'C4K' (Church for Kids) in our hall alongside our regular morning service from the beginning of October, and smaller groups for young people are also restarting. Meetings and Bible studies continue via Zoom.

While we long for more tangible ways to come together as a church community and share the love of Jesus in our city, our responsibility to the safety and wider good of community at large must obviously remain a key focus. Yet, even in the many 'compromises' in the means we use to worship and witness, we have been thankful for the presence and direction of God's Spirit, and the evidence of his grace in us and through us.