

Clogher Diocesan Response Guidance

Updated guidance in red

Statement from the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

As we have said in the Church of Ireland's Return to In-Church Worship Protocols, the reopening of our buildings and public gatherings for worship will only commence when this can be done safely, observing all the public health advice and guidance to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19. Parishes are therefore not under any pressure to open for public worship on any specified date – they should only open when the clergyperson and Select Vestry are sure that they can do so safely. The health and well-being of parishioners and of the whole community is paramount.

Social distancing, hand sanitisation, and respiratory hygiene will need to be guaranteed and practised within our buildings so that members of our parishes can feel safe when they return to public worship.

The 2 metre rule will be followed for the foreseeable future, for the assurance of all and until people's confidence builds. The layout of our buildings and the services provided will be different in this new reality and I would ask for patience, understanding and active co-operation as we adapt to new ways of doing familiar things. Hopefully, these new arrangements will be on a temporary basis; for exactly how long will not be clear. It will all depend on how long the threat of coronavirus remains.

If it makes them feel more comfortable when gathering with others, people may wish to wear face coverings. Others may not. As singing may carry an increased risk of dispersing the virus, innovative ways of using music within the liturgy will need to be developed.

As we slowly move towards a new normality, worship across the Church will be offered through both online and in-church services to facilitate those who may find themselves unable to worship with others in corporate worship for the time being. The Church will find ways to minister to those who will, of necessity, continue shielding because of their dangerous vulnerability to the virus. For them, the experience of lockdown has been particularly difficult and they are advised to take great care to keep safe from harm. Those at greatest risk and those who have suffered most, have not, and will not, be forgotten.

More than three months have now passed since the introduction of the lockdown and our next steps will need to be careful, cautious, and gradual. I again express my gratitude to all in parish leadership for the way they continue to adapt and to serve the needs of parishioners and the wider community.

+John

Return to in–church worship

Transmission of the corona virus within a church setting relates closely to community transmission. If the transmission rate is high in the community then the transmission rate will be high inside a church building etc. A large number of people who have the virus will be asymptomatic which means many of them are infectious but have no symptoms. They are probably unaware therefore that they are carriers of the virus.

The general principle is that the closer the physical contact then the greater the risk of transference. Cold atmosphere and poor ventilation raise the risk so therefore warmer buildings with open windows and doors improves the situation. Contact with shared surfaces increases the risk of spread of the virus. Careful consideration therefore needs to be given to seating, common areas and toilet facilities.

The Church of Ireland has published protocols for a return to in–church worship to provide guidance to parishes in relation to the reopening of places of worship. The document is available at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/ReturntoChurchProtocols.pdf>

In a joint introduction, Archbishop John McDowell and Archbishop Michael Jackson write: *Reopening churches for public worship is only possible if it can be done safely and by minimising the risk of spreading Covid-19. We strongly commend the implementation of these protocols.* A video from the Archbishops, launching and introducing the advice, is available at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/9784/guidance-on-returning-to-inchurch>

Nine stages for reopening church buildings are set out, starting with communicating with workers and parishioners prior to opening on a specific date. The protocols have been prepared by representatives from the House of Bishops, the RB Executive Committee and Representative Church Body staff.

At all times, churches must comply fully with all relevant current legislation in their respective jurisdiction, and follow the advice of health authorities, particularly in relation to social distancing, hand hygiene, and respiratory hygiene.

1. Public Worship

Services – Certain public acts of worship have been able to resume since 29th June in both jurisdictions provided restrictions in the relevant jurisdiction are adhered to. Parishes planning for the re-opening of Churches are directed to the protocols for doing so which can be accessed at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/ReturntoChurchProtocols.pdf>

In the Republic of Ireland an assessment should be carried out for each premises to determine how many can attend within the requirements of social distancing. Where the size of the premises allows for a capacity of greater than 50 this may be permitted only where: social distancing guidelines are adhered to; the premises can be subdivided into distinct sections (cordoned or marked appropriately) of not more than 50 persons in each section; there is a minimum of 4m between sections; each section having its own entrance/exit route; there are separate arrangements for elements of the service involving close contact, e.g. the distribution of Holy Communion; there is strictly no movement of people between sections before, during or after the service; and, the premises is well-ventilated. Account must also be taken regarding the risk of congregation by people outside before and after any services, having regard to outdoor overall limits on mass gatherings and arrangements for staggered exiting after ceremonies. The use of face coverings is strongly recommended for such indoor settings.

In Northern Ireland there is no formula issued in Northern Ireland to assist in the determination of the capacity attendance for any building. Instead, social distancing will be the rule. There will be no upper limit in legislation regarding numbers in attendance though the risk is obviously greater the larger the numbers present.

Music - Singing increases the risk of spread due to the dispersion of respiratory droplets. Communal singing therefore increases the risk due to the proximity of other people in a closed environment. Singing should only be undertaken by a soloist at Church services, provided social distancing is observed. Wind instruments, including pipe organs, should not be used at present.

Face coverings are to be encouraged in an indoor setting if it is not possible to achieve good social distancing. Those who wish to wear facemasks should be permitted to do so.

Families and those from the same household who live together, and travel together should therefore stay and sit together in church.

Buildings – use all accommodation and maximise distance. Utilise space. Therefore, Parish Halls and adjoining buildings can be used for overflow provided that the same hygiene and distancing protocols are observed.

Attendance List for tracing purposes - Community transmission is low at present, but it is highly likely that there will be an outbreak of coronavirus within a church setting in coming months. It would be of

great assistance to the authorities if a register of attendance and contact details could be kept for all church services and meetings. A contact, in tracing terms, is someone you have spent more than 15 minutes with in a 2 metre distance.

Cleaning - The virus can survive on hard surfaces for up to 72 hours. The virus doesn't like sunlight but prefers dark places with hard surfaces and poor ventilation. If a building is used again within the 72 hour period a thorough cleaning must take place using all the recommended products. There is no need for specialist cleaning unless there is an outbreak of the virus. The virus survives for shorter periods on soft furnishings, but they are harder to clean. The removal of cushions and soft seating is recommended. Hard surfaces are easier to clean.

2 metre distancing – 2 metre social distancing should remain in place in Church buildings for the time being.

Toilet facilities and risk of transmission - Good ventilation in toilet facilities along with the necessity of hand washing and the use of hand sanitiser is important. Ideally five minutes should be left between individuals using the facilities. Hand dryers cause a higher risk of spread due to dispersion of the respiratory droplets. Roller towels or communal towels should be removed and replaced with disposable paper towels. Cleaning materials should be provided for each user of the facilities so that surfaces are cleaned before and after use.

Church meetings - It is acceptable for meetings to take place within church buildings provided all the guidance is observed.

Shielding - From the end of July those who have been shielding will be allowed to venture out and will come into the same category as those who are aged 70+. These individuals need to be very cautious and limit their travels and contact with others as well as observing all the appropriate hygiene protocols. Those who have been shielding are very vulnerable and are at greater risk of contracting the virus. Alternative ways to worship should be considered for those who have been shielding e.g. online.

Online Media – Clergy broadcasting services online are encouraged to continue doing so. Should the broadcast take place from the church, physical distancing and hygiene guidance should be observed.

Forthcoming broadcasts for worshipping from home are available online at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Diary/>

Previous videos streamed online for worshipping from home are available at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Videos/>

If your parish co-ordinates worship resources that can be accessed online, please inform the Diocesan Communications Officer so that information of such can be circulated. Guidance for preparing online services is available at https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/9485/covid19-guidance-for-online-services?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=church%20of%20ireland

Daily prayers - Daily prayers can help give structure to our days for those who are housebound with more time for thinking and reflecting. You may wish to consider signposting people to the online resources at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/prayer-worship/book-of-common-prayer/2004-texts/texts> and to produce local booklets to offer as *personal copies only* (please do not pass these around).

Dial-in Service - A dial-in service where members of the public, especially those who are unable to access online material could be considered by parishes. An example from Tempo and Clabby Parishes can be heard by phoning 028 892 70880 in order to listen to parish information and the weekly Sunday service. A useful webpage with advice on how to set up this facility in your parish has been made available by Revd Andrew Irwin at https://medium.com/@andrewirwin_6116/online-church-setting-up-a-dial-in-phone-service-2c99c3bc75ab

2. Pastoral Care

Clergy, Lay Readers and Diocesan Pastoral Assistants – The health and well-being of parish and diocesan clergy together with support staff and volunteers is of paramount importance, both for their own protection and for those they minister to. Those with underlying health conditions, those that develop symptoms, and those over 70 years of age should adhere to government guidance concerning self-isolation and should inform a neighboring member of the clergy or supervising member of clergy of their availability / unavailability in order to enable the continuation of pastoral ministry in the parish. Clergy are reminded to co-ordinate the provision of pastoral care in their parishes in cooperation with neighbouring clergy.

Home Communion – Home Communion is permitted in accordance with the protocols issued for Holy Communion.

Visitation Protocols – With the easing of restrictions concerning the visiting of other households, pastoral visiting should resume provided social distancing and hygiene protocols are adhered to, and the agreement has been sought in advance from the person being visited. **It is advisable to limit home visits to one per day in order to avoid the risk of spreading the virus from house to house.** The hospital chaplains are not permitted to carry out hospital visits unless expressly invited to do so by hospital staff. Clergy who are asked to visit parishioners in hospital or residential care should only do so if permitted by the hospital/residential facility and with the consent of the individual's family. Hygiene and physical distancing measures must be observed.

Self-isolated - For those who need to self-isolate, consider how people can be supported with phone calls and via social media, and help with the delivery of shopping and / or medication. It is very important that all church members involved in such support are very clear on and committed to adhering to the Government's isolation and general hygiene advice.

Baptisms – In Northern Ireland places of worship will be enabled to resume baptisms from Friday 10th July.

Weddings - In Northern Ireland indoor marriage ceremonies in places of worship can resume from Friday 10th July. It will be up to venues to determine their precise opening dates for ceremonies. Numbers attending indoor marriage ceremonies will be determined by the venue on a risk assessed basis, taking account of the individual circumstances of each and adhering to all relevant public health advice and guidance. Church weddings should take place in Church and no longer outdoors.

Funerals – There is an increased risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) where families and communities come together following the death, from any cause, of a loved one. It is strongly advised that public health advice is followed to reduce the spread of infection.

In Northern Ireland funeral services can be conducted in a place of worship or in a funeral home. The size and circumstances of the venue will determine the maximum number that can attend the service safely whilst observing social distancing of at least two metres, wherever possible. It is recommended that face coverings are used for indoor services. Whilst the number of mourners at a funeral service will be determined by the size of the venue following risk assessment, a maximum of only 30 are permitted to gather for the committal at the graveside. Any mourner displaying symptoms of coronavirus should not attend a funeral as they pose a risk to others.

Mental Health and Hardship – Efforts should be made to support those who may be struggling with mental health issues and/or hardship. It will be important to take measures, such as regular phone communication, to help alleviate loneliness and despair.

Links to helpful pieces regarding mental health:

www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/copingwithchange

www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/worry

www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/fear

3. Community Response

Volunteer Mobilisation – Volunteer support may be necessary for medical staff and for individuals in the community. Churches are well placed to channel information, particularly on requests for volunteers. Information will be circulated to clergy and parishes if and when available.

Public Reassurance – Clergy can offer important public reassurance through “the sacrament of presence” and being seen to be “present” and available. This does not include physically visiting those diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who are self-isolating: clergy need to protect themselves and others, making sure they adhere to physical distancing and hygiene precautions. Clergy can also be a trusted voice in a community and help with the distribution of government advice ensuring isolated members of the community are aware of the precautions they can take. Network as appropriate with local health, welfare, safety networks, funeral directors and other service providers. Ensure contact details for these service providers are held by key parish leadership. Be aware of local information and peculiarities e.g. changes in public utilities or services that affect your community specifically.

4. Parish Administration

Premises - Churches and Church Halls can be used for services and meetings provided Social Distancing and Hygiene guidance is adhered to. Those parishes which open their Church for private prayer and/or their carpark for drive-in Church services can continue to do so, provided a risk assessment has been completed and that social distancing and hygiene regulations can be adhered too. Parishes have been provided with further guidance directly in this regard.

Graveyards - We must continue to observe Government Guidelines, encourage safe social distancing and that gates, if possible, are left open to avoid people having to use the handles of the gates to churchyards as they enter. A healthy mixture of care and sensitivity as our churchyards re-open for the benefit of those who are grieving and want to visit family graves is to be encouraged. Parishes may find the poster available at http://clogher.anglican.org/images_non_news_small/Graveyard%20Notice%20Corona%20Virus.jpg useful to display at the entrances to graveyards.

Easter Vestries – Triennial Easter Vestry meetings for 2020 can now take place no later than 30th September 2020 provided all social distancing and hygiene guidance is observed and the usual requirement surrounding notification of the Easter Vestry Meeting is observed. Easter Vestry Returns have been made available to parishes. Existing officers should remain in post until the parish Easter Vestry meeting takes place.

Easter Vestry Annual Returns - Easter Vestry Annual Returns can be completed once a meeting of the Easter Vestry has taken place and should be returned to the Diocesan Office no later than Friday 9th October 2020.

Parish Annual Accounts - Select Vestries are at liberty, if they wish, to have their 2019 annual accounts completed in the appropriate manner for the parish concerned, and have the accounts considered and hopefully approved by the Select Vestry, whilst ensuring observation of Government restrictions. Please note it is the Select Vestry that consider and approve the annual accounts, not the Easter Vestry - the accounts are presented to the Easter Vestry by the outgoing Select Vestry. Once accounts have been approved by the Select Vestry they can be submitted to the diocese and to the relevant charity regulator, taking care to ensure they fulfill any of the charity regulator requirements and deadlines in their respective jurisdiction. Certain parishes in the Republic of Ireland are not yet registered with the Charities

Regulatory Authority and therefore do not have to submit their accounts to the Charities Regulatory Authority, but should continue to submit their annual accounts to the Diocese when possible.

Charity Returns – The charities regulators in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have both confirmed that organisations should follow government advice and that organisations will not be considered to be in contravention of the Act in this respect. Further information is available at <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/news/covid-19-coronavirus-information/>

<https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/information-for-charities/coronavirus-covid-19-and-charities>

Select Vestries – Select Vestry meetings can take place provided social distancing and hygiene guidance is adhered to.

Parish Organisations – All parish organisations should remain cancelled until further notice.

5. RCB Guidance

A range of guidance for churches is available online at

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/?query=&categories=120>

6. Diocesan Office

The Diocesan Office is closed until further notice. Mail will be received intermittently. Staff will be working remotely and can be contacted by email or by telephoning the **Diocesan Office – 02866347879:**

- Diocesan Accountant – A Brown, opt 2, accountant@clogher.anglican.org
- Communications & Magazine Editor – B Donaldson, opt 3 – dco@clogher.anglican.org
- Diocesan Secretary – G Moore, opt 5, secretary@clogher.anglican.org
- Archdeacon – B Harper, opt 6 – archdeacon@clogher.anglican.org
- Dean & Enniskillen Cathedral Office – B Rennick, opt 7 – enniskillen@clogher.anglican.org
- Properties – H Robinson, opt 8 – properties@clogher.anglican.org
- Safeguarding & GDPR – M Skuce, opt 9 – safeguarding@clogher.anglican.org

7. Communications

Diocesan Magazine – A free digital version of the July edition of the Diocesan Magazine is available on the diocesan website at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Magazine/>

Unfortunately hard copies of the magazine will not be produced currently. Parishes may wish to print off hard copies or sections of the magazine from the online version in order to provide copies to those within their parish who are unable to access the magazine online.

Information for the September edition of the diocesan magazine can be sent to editor@clogher.anglican.org up to 15th August. It is hoped that the printed version of the Diocesan Magazine will resume for the September edition provided restrictions permit.

Information and Guidance – The diocesan website will be used as the principle point of communication to provide regular updates for parishes and the general public. Information will also be made available through the diocesan Facebook page and through press releases. Information particularly for the attention of parishes and clergy will be circulated via email.

Reaching out – Parishes, with their own websites and Facebook pages and those without these are welcome to use the Diocesan Website and Facebook Page to communicate the latest advice to parishioners and worshippers. Please email dco@clogher.anglican.org with information.

8. Diocesan Diary

Clogher Diocesan Synod will take place, provisionally, in St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen (the Cathedral rather than the Hall) on Thursday 26th November 2020 at 7pm. Details will be confirmed in due course.