

## Clogher Diocesan Response Guidance

Updated guidance in red

### **Restrictions - NORTHERN IRELAND**

The Northern Ireland Executive introduced restrictions for all households in Northern Ireland from 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 - No mixing of households in private dwellings is permitted, exception in certain circumstances. Circumstances particularly relevant to parishes include: a funeral; a house move; and a marriage ceremony in a private dwelling where one partner is terminally ill.

On 14<sup>th</sup> October the Northern Ireland Executive agreed a range of significant time-bound interventions to curb the spread of Covid-19 in Northern Ireland. In addition to current household restrictions, the following measures, relevant in a Church context, will come into regulatory effect on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October and will be in place for a period of four weeks:

- Funerals to be limited to 25 people with no pre- or post-funeral gatherings;
- Wedding ceremonies to be limited to 25 people with no receptions. This will be implemented on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October. Venues providing the post-ceremony or partnership celebration this weekend may remain open for this purpose but may not provide other services for people who are not part of the wedding or partnership party and this will be limited to 25.

And the following advice, relevant in a Church context, will be added to the existing health guidance:

- Work from home unless unable to do so;
- No unnecessary travel should be undertaken.

The half term holiday break for schools and colleges will be extended to a two-week break to run from 19<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October.

Places of worship will remain open with a **mandatory requirement** to wear face coverings when entering and exiting. This will not apply to parties to a marriage.

### **Restrictions – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

Counties Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan will move to Level 4 under the Plan for Living with COVID-19 at midnight on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October. Level 4 has the following implications:

- You can not have visitors from outside your own household. No social or family gatherings should take place in other settings;
- Up to 6 guests can attend a wedding ceremony and reception. (Weddings planned for 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> October may go ahead as originally planned up to a limit of 25 guests. From Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October, weddings may proceed but with a limit of 6 guests for ceremony and reception (irrespective of venue). Guests cannot leave their county to attend a wedding;
- No organised indoor gatherings should take place;
- Gatherings of up to 15 people can take place outdoors. For example: outdoor arts events or training events;
- Religious services will be held online, though places of worship may remain open for private prayer;
- Maximum number of mourners to attend a funeral is 25;
- Those aged over 70 years and over and the medically vulnerable should exercise judgement regarding the extent to which they engage with others and in activities outside home;
- Visits to long-term residential care facilities are suspended, with the exception of visits required for critical and compassionate circumstances.

The rest of the country remains at level 3 under the Plan for Living with COVID-19 until midnight on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020, at which point the situation will be reviewed by the government.

## **Transmission**

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 improve 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.

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.

## **Shielding - NORTHERN IRELAND**

Since 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020, shielding for extremely vulnerable people has been paused. Updated guidance for individuals who were shielding is available at [Pausing of shielding for extremely vulnerable people](#)

Given the rise in the levels of COVID-19, medically vulnerable and older people are asked to be particularly careful in following the advice on limiting household contacts, social distancing, hand washing and wearing a face covering.

Alternative ways to worship should be considered for those who have been shielding e.g. online.

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).

## **Shielding – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

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## **Health and Social Care Facilities - NORTHERN IRELAND**

To protect patients, residents and staff from COVID-19, visits to health and social care facilities in Northern Ireland have been reduced. Health Trusts and care homes will implement more localised and tighter restrictions in the event of coronavirus outbreaks. More frequent visits may be permitted in exceptional circumstances, including palliative care and those receiving end of life care. These arrangements will have to be agreed in advance with the ward or care home.

## **Residential Care Facilities – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

Visits to long-term residential care facilities are suspended, with the exception of visits required for critical and compassionate circumstances.

## **Funerals - NORTHERN IRELAND**

Funerals can continue to take place, in line with [guidance on managing funerals and associated gatherings](#)(external link opens in a new window / tab)

**From Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October, for a period of four weeks, all funerals (both in Churches, Funeral Homes and at gravesides) will be restricted to 25 people, with no pre- or post-funeral gatherings.**

**The size of the venue will determine the maximum number, up to a maximum of 25 people, that can attend the service safely whilst observing social distancing of at least two metres.**

Any mourner displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend a funeral, as they pose a risk to others.

The Public Health Agency has produced a number of useful documents to help bereaved families during the COVID-19 pandemic. [COVID-19 bereavement resources](#)(external link opens in a new window / tab)

It is important to be aware that people attending funerals do so from a wider catchment area than those normally attending church services; therefore regulations must be strictly to adhered to in these circumstances.

## **Funerals – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

Funerals can continue to take place, however the maximum number of mourners to attend a funeral is 25.

It is important to be aware that people attending funerals do so from a wider catchment area than those normally attending church services; therefore regulations must be strictly adhered to in these circumstances.

## **Marriages - NORTHERN IRELAND**

Marriages can continue to take place, in line with the current restrictions.

A marriage where one partner is terminally ill can take place in a private dwelling at which a maximum of 10 people can attend, not counting children aged 12 and under in that total.

**From Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October, initially for a period of four weeks, Wedding ceremonies to be limited to 25 people with no receptions.**

Numbers attending indoor ceremonies will be determined by the venue on a risk-assessed basis, **up to a maximum of 25 people attending**, taking account of the individual circumstances of each and adhering to all relevant public health advice. Guidance has been developed to help and is available at [Getting married in a religious ceremony](#)

Church weddings should take place in Church and no longer outdoors.

It is important to be aware that people attending weddings do so from a wider catchment area than those normally attending church services; therefore regulations must be strictly adhered to in these circumstances.

## **Marriages – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

**Up to 6 guests can attend a wedding ceremony and reception. (Weddings planned for 16th, 17th, 18th October may go ahead as originally planned up to a limit of 25 guests. From Monday 19th October, weddings may proceed but with a limit of 6 guests for ceremony and reception (irrespective of venue). Guests cannot leave their county to attend a wedding;**

It is important to be aware that people attending weddings do so from a wider catchment area than those normally attending church services; therefore regulations must be strictly adhered to in these circumstances.

## Church Services - NORTHERN IRELAND

In Northern Ireland, even during the next four weeks of restrictions, Churches can remain open for services of worship. Strict 2 metre social distancing continues to apply, along with other measures such as hand sanitiser being available etc. Everyone should be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings at all services, apart for the person leading the service at the front, provided they are at a distance from the congregation. It is a **mandatory requirement** to wear face coverings when entering and exiting, this will not apply to parties to a marriage.

Guidance was issued to faith leaders regarding the reopening of places of worship for services in June, and is available at <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/letter-faith-leaders-reopening-places-worship>

The Church of Ireland protocols for the reopening of places of worship are available at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/ReturntoChurchProtocols.pdf>

Additional information can be accessed at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/631/return-to-inchurch-worship-protocols>

The reopening of our buildings and public gatherings for worship should only continue when this can be done safely, observing all the public health advice and guidance to reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19, when the clergy person 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. **Two-metre social distancing should continue for the foreseeable future** (*please note that in certain churches the use of every other pew does not fulfil the 2 metre requirement, therefore additional spacing should be considered*).

**Whilst it is a mandatory requirement to wear face coverings when entering and exiting a place of worship**, people are strongly recommended and encouraged to wear face coverings indoors at Church where possible, as per the Church Leaders statement, available at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/9941/face-coverings-in-churches>

Those arranging services should make efforts to limit the length of time a service lasts, in order to accommodate those wearing face coverings.

Churches can cautiously consider permitting those wearing face coverings and social distancing at least 2 metres whilst attending church services to participate in singing, provided it is done so at a quiet level. Those not participating in singing should be invited to meditate on the words.

The decision whether to play a pipe organ should be based on a risk assessment along with adherence to cleaning guidance and social distancing.

Wind instruments that are blown into by a person should not be played indoors.

Any instrument played during worship should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use, and those playing instruments should ensure that they do not mix and that appropriate social distancing requirements are observed.

Music should not be played at volume levels that make normal conversations difficult.

Choir practices should be avoided unless essential, and if taking place public health and safeguarding requirements must be observed.

Account must 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.

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 maximize distance. Utilize 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 - It would be helpful to the authorities if a register of attendance and contact details are 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.

Toilet facilities and risk of transmission - Good ventilation in toilet facilities along with the necessity of hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer 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 Services – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

Religious services cannot take place, instead they can move online, though places of worship may remain open for private prayer.

### **Online Services**

Where possible, parishes should attempt to continue offering online services to facilitate those who may find themselves unable to worship with others in corporate worship for the time being.

Clergy broadcasting services online are encouraged to continue doing so.

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/>

## **Harvest Thanksgiving Services - NORTHERN IRELAND**

Harvest Thanksgiving services can take place, however keeping in mind that extensive cleaning is required where there are more than two services in a church within a 72 hour period, churches may wish to consider holding any additional Harvest Thanksgiving service, over and above the Sunday morning service, on a Wednesday or Thursday evening. Where parishes wish to permit decorating of the church for harvest, this should be undertaken only when hygiene and social distancing rules are observed. Items from harvest displays should not be passed on to individuals after the Harvest Thanksgiving service concludes.

## **Church meetings - NORTHERN IRELAND**

In light of the new restrictions in Northern Ireland, with the exception of services of worship as outlined above, for the next four weeks from Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October, where possible it is recommended that all other meetings should either move to being online or be postponed.

## **Church meetings – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

No organized indoor gatherings should take place. Parishes may wish to consider online options as a means of conducting such meetings.

## **Sunday School and Children's Organizations - NORTHERN IRELAND**

In light of the new restrictions in Northern Ireland, during the two week period when schools will be closed, from Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October, it is strongly recommended that specific children or youth gatherings are not held.

## **Sunday School and Children's Organizations – REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

No organized indoor gatherings should take place.

## **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 and those that develop symptoms 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.

## **Home Communion**

Home Communion is permitted in accordance with the protocols issued for Holy Communion. Every effort should be made in terms of planning and adherence to social distancing and hygiene protocols, particularly at this time when there is a renewed effort to prevent community transmission.

## **Visitation Protocols**

Pastoral visiting can take place 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.

## **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](http://www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/copingwithchange)

[www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/worry](http://www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/worry)

[www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/fear](http://www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/fear)

## **Premises - NORTHERN IRELAND**

Churches and Church Halls can be used for services. In light of the new restrictions in Northern Ireland, with the exception of services of worship, for the next four weeks from Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October, where possible it is recommended that all other meetings should either move to being online or be postponed.

Those parishes which open their Church for private prayer and/or their car park 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 to.

## 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. Parishes may find the poster available at [http://clogher.anglican.org/images\\_non\\_news\\_small/Graveyard%20Notice%20Corona%20Virus.jpg](http://clogher.anglican.org/images_non_news_small/Graveyard%20Notice%20Corona%20Virus.jpg) useful to display at the entrances to graveyards.

## Select Vestries - NORTHERN IRELAND

In light of the new restrictions in Northern Ireland, for the next four weeks from Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October, where possible it is recommended that all meetings should either move to being online or be postponed.

## Select Vestries - REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

No organized indoor gatherings should take place. Instead, meetings can take place online.

## RCB Guidance

A range of guidance for churches is available online at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/?query=&categories=120>

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

## Diocesan Magazine

The November edition of the Magazine will be made available in hardcopy. Digital versions of previous editions are available on the diocesan website at

<http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Magazine/>

Information for the November edition of the diocesan magazine can be sent to [editor@clogher.anglican.org](mailto:editor@clogher.anglican.org) up to 15<sup>th</sup> October.

## Diocesan Synod

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

## **In the Event of an Outbreak**

In the event that an outbreak of Covid-19 occurs as a result of a Church service, contact tracing will be dealt with by the relevant public authority, however parishes may wish to alert parishioners by issuing a general statement at the time.