

2 November 2020: Revised pastoral advice from the College of Bishops for Phase 3

The College of Bishops is committed to providing revised and ongoing guidance in relation to the pastoral and liturgical ministry of our churches as Scotland continues through the phases of responding to the Coronavirus lockdown. Guidance on the specific actions that may have to be taken to re-open buildings for worship are being provided by the Advisory Group. The rules and guidance for all of us are becoming increasingly complex and may change due to local situations at any time.

A key message in this hard time of ongoing lockdown: In all church life, please be kind to yourselves and to each other. The pressure and stress of the ongoing pandemic are immense and the ongoing timescales are long and uncertain. In all of this trust in God: and take care of yourself.

Key dates and features for church life in Phase 3 of lockdown are:

15 Jul Places of worship, when local situation is right, were permitted re-open for congregational services, communal prayer and contemplation with physical distancing and limited numbers to achieve physical distancing (up to a maximum of 50 people). Funerals and weddings have a limit of 20 people;

8 Aug: Face coverings mandatory in places of worship (except for the distanced service leader and people with exemptions);

14 Sep: Subject to 23 Sep position noted below, pastoral activities indoors and outdoors limited to two households and six people and;

23 Sep: No social visits permitted to other households in private homes. Pastoral visiting or home communions are permitted for vulnerable/isolated people, with clergy/trained visitors and full risk assessment and safety protocols.

[2 Nov: a five 'level' system for local variation of Covid-19 restrictions comes into effect, by local authority area. Changes to numbers worshipping apply in the top 'level 4' and changes to travel between local authorities apply between levels 0-2 and levels 3 & 4.](#)

Pastoral Guidance as at 2 November:

Resumption of Worship

We can still, with great care, gather together for worship [and this situation remains true for all five levels \(with some minor changes at level 4 – see Phase 3 guidance for details\)](#). The careful conditions for gatherings in church described here will make the experience of worship quite different from anything we have known: the Eucharist in one kind only; the wearing of face coverings; the numbers of and distance between worshippers; the absence of singing. But being able to worship at all, even with these conditions, is something we can give thanks for.

Once the decision has been made by clergy/vestry that this is the right time for a particular community and context, pastoral guidance for aspects of church life is presented as follows:

- Annex A: Protocol for eucharistic worship (minor changes to preparation of elements)
- Annex A2: A new protocol for public worship with reserved sacrament
- Annex B: Protocol for home communions (unchanged).
- Annex C: Protocol for anointing/healing/prayer ministry (unchanged)

Travel to worship:

The introduction of the level-based approach in the Government's Strategic Framework has implications for travel. A person living in a level 3 or 4 Local Authority area should not travel outside the Local Authority area in which they live - unless required to do so for essential reasons. Also, whilst a person living in a level 0, 1 or 2 Local Authority area may travel within those areas, they should not travel into a level 3 or level 4 area except for essential purposes. Essential purposes comprise a limited range of matters but include 'work' and, for level 3, attending one's 'normal place of worship'.

This means that worshippers should not travel in or out of a level 4 area for the purpose of attending public worship in person. Worshippers may travel in or out of a level 3 area (but not if that involves travelling in or out of a level 4 area) to attend their normal place of worship. For those who might be inhibited by the level 4 travel ban, there remain the regular weekly offerings of provincial worship, as well as many online services offered by local churches.

There is a specific exception in the government guidance for a minister of religion to travel to or from a place of worship even in a level 4 area. There is also a 'work' exception that could allow clergy, lay readers and paid church employees to travel over a level 4 Local Authority border where necessary for the purpose of undertaking essential pastoral work or other necessary work functions.

Pastoral visiting ~~from 23 September~~

Following additional guidance from the Scottish Government, indoor pastoral visiting and taking home communion to vulnerable/isolated people in their private homes are still permitted in all levels ~~from 23 September 2020~~. This is an exception to the ban as it is classed as for 'work purposes, or for the provision of voluntary or charitable services'. Please exercise very careful judgement about whether any such visit is essential.

For such essential visiting in private homes the 'standard' rules on meetings apply:

- you may meet with vulnerable/isolated/housebound people from one other household indoors;
- meeting can be up to six people in total, excluding children under 12 from those two households;

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- physical distancing maintained and hygiene measures such as hand sanitising and the wearing of face coverings
- no more than a total of four such visits can be made in any one day;
- home communions can be taken to those being visited (see guidance below)

~~Any 'local lockdown' restriction on meeting indoors or outdoors supersedes this guidance~~

Clergy and pastoral visitors should only carry out visits to vulnerable/isolated people requiring urgent support to justify the 'work' exemption. Lay pastoral visitors must be PVG cleared and be trained/supervised.

Other meetings can take place outdoors or indoors in 'public spaces' (e.g. church buildings) following the above constraints on number of households and numbers meeting.

Please remember to pace yourself as we continue through the long process of lockdown easing. The state of lockdown has been increased from 23 September: you should expect to be carrying out all the same duties and visits that were possible before this date. And please also remember, no cleric/visitor should undertake any visits if they have any concerns for their own health or wellbeing.

Outdoor church activities from 2 November

No realistic outdoor social events will be possible from 14 September. Outdoor worship is possible in levels 0 and 1 (subject to restrictions - (see the Phase 3 Guidance and further comment below), but events such as congregational picnics, outings, fundraising activities, fetes, car boot sales are not possible given the meeting restrictions.

Later Guidance for Phase 3 – as the Government applies 'levels' and potentially changes restrictions

The tighter rules on households meeting indoors and outdoors will continue to constrain other activities within Scottish Episcopal Churches. Until the Government guidance changes to permit meetings and other non-worship-service gatherings or larger scope outdoor activities, the following activities are not permitted or must continue as virtual or other non-physical forms:

- Vestry and other meetings
- Panel job interviews
- Large social events & activities (indoors or outdoors)

As outlined by the Scottish Government, Level 0 may permit eight people from three households to meet indoors. This would still not permit most of the activities above to take place.

Levels 2-4 all prohibit outdoor events of any kind. Levels 0 permits outdoor events. Level 1 permits limited outdoor events.

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We will issue further revisions and guidance as the Scottish Government announces further increases or relaxations in the restrictions.

Please continue to exercise caution in all you do as you resume the pastoral activities in the life of our churches: please do all you can to protect all those in your care.

Again: please remember the key message to be kind to yourselves and each other in the work to support and help our church life to continue.

+Mark, Primus & Moray, Ross & Caithness
+Kevin, Glasgow & Galloway
+John, Edinburgh
+Anne, Aberdeen & Orkney
+Andrew, Brechin
+Ian, St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane

Annex A: Protocol for Eucharistic Worship in Phase 3 of the Scottish Government Lockdown Easing

The management of the buildings and safe movement of the congregation is covered in the Phase 3 Guidance from the College of Bishops' Advisory Group on the Re-opening of Buildings. This Annex has liturgical and pastoral guidance on the conduct of eucharistic services.

The Peace, if that is the local tradition, should be maintained by the president and congregation but observed (maintaining physical distancing) by voice and/or body movement with only those immediately around them.

The Offertory should not have the elements of offering brought to the altar as part of the liturgy. The elements should be on a credence table or similar for the president to prepare the altar. The offering should not be brought to the altar.

Offering/Preparation of the elements

Only the president should touch the elements. If they (or any other aspect of the preparation) have been prepared/touched by a sacristan/assistant (e.g. if a visiting priest is presiding), that person must wear a face covering throughout and sanitise their hands thoroughly before touching the elements and placing them in the ciborium/container and replacing the cover.

The president must wash hands /use hand sanitiser:

- a) before preparing and setting up the elements on the altar; and
- b) after breaking the bread and receiving the elements themselves, before offering the bread to communicants.

Eucharistic Prayer

Speaking, singing and chanting across the congregational bread is to be avoided. The bread should be covered e.g. with a pall or with the ciborium cover in place during the eucharistic prayer. The president's host should not be shared with the congregation following elevations/fraction.

Communion

Communion should be administered in one kind only i.e. bread only. The president alone should take the wine, consuming the moderate amount of wine that has been consecrated.

The president should wear a face-covering (a visor is not an adequate face covering) while administering bread. Hand washing/use of hand sanitiser should take place after donning face covering and before administering bread.

Communicants should receive the bread in their hands. All communicants should also be encouraged to wash hands /use hand sanitiser before and after receiving the bread. The president should avoid any contact with communicants' hands.

Altar rails should not be used but communicants should receive standing maintaining physical distancing (e.g. in a physically distanced queue up to the president, rather

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than standing at the altar rails). The details of how this will be enacted will depend on the local situation, particularly the layout of the building and should be presented in the pro forma phase 3 plan submitted to the bishop.

It will not be possible to maintain any required physical distancing for the brief time that the president administers the sacrament. However, it is believed that the risk associated with this is relatively low.

The communicant should extend their hands to receive the host and then step to the side in order to place the host in their mouth.

Ablutions: As normal, done by the president. After the service the chalice and paten should either be washed in warm water with liquid soap detergent, or if this is not possible, cleaned with an hand sanitizer (with an alcohol content in excess of 60% in the case of an ethanol based product, or in excess of 70% in the case of one using isopropyl alcohol (isopropanol)), taken away and washed up elsewhere.

Reserving Sacrament

Churches which reserve the Sacrament may reserve the bread from the service. The president should place the hosts in the vessel for reservation and place them in the aumbry. They should not be consumed or distributed for 72 hours by anyone other than the priest who reserved them. See Annex A2, Protocol for public worship with reserved sacrament and Annex C, Protocol for Home Communion in Phase 3 for their use in Home Communion.

Vestments

To reduce the risk of infection it is recommended that vestments are not shared.

Incense

For churches where incense is part of their tradition, the risk of use in Phase 3 must be assessed. Use of incense poses risks because it may cause some people to cough and thus potentially increase the risk of transmission of the virus.

If incense IS used at eucharists (or e.g. solemn evensong), the incense load in the thurible should be reduced and thuribles should not be carried into the congregation. If the building size permits, censuring may be carried out at a distance from the main congregation with reduced incense loads.

Annex A2: Protocol for Public Worship with Reserved Sacrament in Phase 3 of the Scottish Government Lockdown Easing

The guidance in Annex A should be used except where differences are outlined below, substituting 'service leader' for 'president'.

It is assumed that more than 72 hours has elapsed since the bread was reserved by a priest, allowing the service leader to distribute them at this service of 'communion by extension'.

Offering/Preparation of the elements

The bread only should be brought from the aumbry or place of storage and placed by the service leader on the altar/table. Only the service leader should touch the ciborium/vessel holding the bread.

The service leader must wash hands /use hand sanitiser:

- a) before placing the bread on the altar/table; and
- b) before uncovering the bread to receive it themselves or to offer it to other communicants.

Thanksgiving Prayer

The bread should remain covered during the prayer of thanksgiving, invitation to communion etc.

Communion

Communion should be administered in one kind only i.e. bread only. The service leader should also only receive in one kind.

Reserving Sacrament

Any bread that has not been consumed should be re-covered and returned to the aumbry/place of storage. They should not be consumed or distributed for 72 hours by anyone other than the service leader from the public worship concerned.

Cleaning vessels: After the service the chalice and paten should either be washed in warm water with liquid soap detergent, or if this is not possible, cleaned with an hand sanitizer (with an alcohol content in excess of 60% in the case of an ethanol based product, or in excess of 70% in the case of one using isopropyl alcohol (isopropanol)), taken away and washed up elsewhere.

Annex B: Protocol for Home Communion in Phase 3 of the Scottish Government Lockdown Easing

Pastoral context

The visit to a congregant's home/hospital bed etc. should only take place if permitted under Government guidelines and once eucharistic worship has resumed in the congregant's church buildings.

The visit must follow distancing & hygiene rules. The visitor must wear a face covering and wash hands /use hand sanitiser before and after the visit.

Records of who conducts all pastoral visits with Home Communion must be kept.

Liturgy

If a shortened liturgy is followed, a paper copy of the liturgy should be given to the communicant. This copy should be left behind and kept for future visits or disposed of into the waste bin.

Reserved Sacrament

Annex A of this pastoral guidance details how the bread should be reserved. The reserved sacrament should not be consumed or distributed for 72 hours by anyone other than the priest who reserved them. Only take bread for a single visit at a time.

Before the visit, while preparing the sacrament, the pastoral visitor should wash hands /use hand sanitiser and place the bread into a pyx to be taken to the communicant's home. The pyx should first be washed.

During the liturgy, the bread should be placed on a paten or plate and offered to the communicant. They should take the bread with their fingers and consume it.

After the visit the pyx and paten (if used) should be washed before any further visits.

Annex C: Protocol for Anointing/Healing/Prayer Ministry in Phase 3 of the Scottish Government Lockdown Easing

Pastoral context

Physical contact is a high-risk activity in a pandemic and should be avoided if at all possible. If it is necessary to have physical contact for urgent pastoral reasons, consult with the diocesan bishop first and follow this guidance.

This contact may take place in a worship setting (e.g. anointing/laying on of hands during a baptism/eucharist/ordination) or a home visit (e.g. anointing a sick person at home).

Physical contact

Any physical contact activities must follow current distancing & strict hygiene rules. Everyone involved must wear a face covering (a visor is not an adequate face covering) and wash hands /use hand sanitiser before and after any individual contact. If contact is made to several people, wash hands /use hand sanitiser between each contact.

Oils

The use of oils is not encouraged, but if it essential that oil is used (for e.g. confirmation /ordination /anointing of the sick) then a new drop of oil should be taken from the church's supply for each person anointed and placed on a disposable or clean receptacle, with hand washing /hand sanitiser use before and after each transferral. Do not use an oil stock.

Baptism

Only clergy and parents should be at the font while godparents should maintain physical distance. Clergy should not hold the infant but ask a parent to do so for the duration of the service. Water should be poured over the infant's forehead using an appropriate implement such as a shell. The sign of the cross should be made using an implement that will avoid direct physical contact. Parents should wipe the forehead of the baptised person with paper towels which should be immediately disposed of. If a candle is lit from the Paschal Candle as part of the ceremony, this might be done by one of the parents. Face coverings should be worn throughout.

Baptisms by immersion cannot be safely conducted at present.

Laying on of hands at ordination

In the case of the ordination of deacons, the bishop alone, as usual, should lay on hands. He or she should wash hands /use hand sanitiser before and after each candidate and wear a face covering (a visor is not an adequate face covering).

At the ordination of priests, the bishop should be joined by two priests (and no more). If more than one candidate is being ordained, to minimise the possibility of infection it is recommended that one or both of the priests who assist the bishop in the ordination of each candidate should be the same for each candidate.