

## Return to Church Protocols FAQs – 10th July 2020

### Reopening of churches

#### **When must churches reopen?**

Churches should only reopen when the incumbent (or other officiating member of the clergy in charge) and the select vestry feel it is safe to do so. Dates specified by governments in either jurisdiction specify the earliest dates on which churches were permitted to reopen. Churches are not, however, obliged to open on those dates but should only reopen when they can do so safely.

#### **Should toilet facilities be closed?**

It is impractical to suggest that people be denied access to toilet facilities, but their provision does give rise to additional cleaning requirements. The combination of shorter services and the suspension of after-service tea and coffee should significantly reduce demand for toilets.

#### **Should churches with no sanitary facilities be reopened?**

Reopening churches with poor or non-existent sanitary facilities (e.g. running water, toilets) may expose people to a higher level of risk. If there are other churches in the parish group or union that have better facilities, consideration should be given as to whether it is necessary to open all their churches at this time.

#### **Can amplifiers be used to relay services to people in church halls, car parks etc?**

These guidelines only relate to the conduct of public worship in churches. However, in Northern Ireland, provision has been made for the relaying of services to other buildings on the church site.

#### **Is there still a maximum of 50 people allowed at a church service in ROI?**

The Irish Government general advice is that indoor gatherings should have a 50-person limit. On Friday, 3rd July, a limited exemption was given to places of worship in certain circumstances, including that the premises should be subdivided into distinct sections (cordoned or marked appropriately) of not more than 50 people in each section.

Due respect needs to be paid to the capacity of the building and the arrangements for multiples of 50 people if you intend to proceed with more than 50 people in a church at the same service. At all times, public health criteria are paramount.

For further information, please see the government announcement: [www.gov.ie/en/press-release/261f7-cabinet-committee-reviews-progress-on-irelands-covid-19-response/#places-of-worship](http://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/261f7-cabinet-committee-reviews-progress-on-irelands-covid-19-response/#places-of-worship)

Everyone is reminded to keep abreast of official government guidelines as they are subject to change.

### Hand sanitisers, face coverings, etc.

#### **Where should hand sanitiser be provided?**

Hand sanitising stations are a potential bottleneck and care should be taken to ensure that social distancing is maintained around them. The exact positioning of sanitising stations will be determined by a number of factors, including the layout of a specific church.

### **Should masks/face coverings be worn?**

The current advice is that everyone attending church services in the Republic of Ireland should wear a face covering except where, for example, it is precluded due to an existing medical condition. In Northern Ireland, face coverings are advised where social distancing cannot be guaranteed.

### **Should churches provide face coverings, gloves etc. for parishioners?**

Apart from a hand sanitising station, churches should not provide other supplies to parishioners attending services, with the following exceptions:

- Gloves, masks and tissues should be available in the isolation area
- Tissues should be available to everyone attending services
- Where the congregation are asked to self-record attendance, pens should be brought by parishioners to avoid sharing.

### **Should pedal-operated bins be provided?**

Pedal-operated bins are preferred to open bins.

### **Must unused tissues provided in pews be disposed of after every service?**

If someone opens a packet of tissues, they should bring it home with them after the service or place it in the bin provided. Failing that, it should be disposed of when the pews are being cleaned.

## **'Return to Work' forms**

### **Who should complete the 'Return to Work' form?**

All employees, officiating clergy and readers must complete the 'Return to Work' form. However, it cannot be stated too emphatically that anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19, or who has reason to believe that they have been in contact with someone who has, should not attend church or volunteer in any capacity until they have received medical advice that it is safe to do so.

### **How long must 'Return to Work' forms be retained?**

Where someone answers 'No' to all questions on the 'Return to Work' form, that fact should be noted and the form itself disposed of securely. If they answer 'Yes' to any question and their return has to be postponed, the form should be retained until a new 'all clear' one has been completed, at which point the original can be disposed of securely.

### **Must a new 'Return to Work' form be completed by any new clergy or employees arriving in the parish?**

As filling out the form is not an onerous task, it would be a wise precaution to ask new clergy or employees to do so.

### **How often should 'Return to Work' forms be completed?**

If a person answers 'No' to every question, and providing their circumstances do not subsequently change, they need only complete the form once.

### **Where should 'Return to Work' forms be sent?**

Clergy should send their forms to the diocese. All other workers should send them to the incumbent (or other officiating member of the clergy in charge).

### **Does signing a 'Return to Work' form signify that a person has not been working while churches were closed?**

No. It is recognised that clergy and other workers have been hard at work throughout this crisis. The phrase 'return to work' is used to reflect terminology used in the wider community

and is in no way intended to detract from the enormous efforts made by Church of Ireland clergy, employees and volunteers during these exceptional times.

### **Contact tracing**

#### **How is contact tracing to be carried out?**

Contact tracing is a specialised function carried out by the public health authorities. Churches should keep records of attendance in case they are requested by these authorities and should not undertake their own contact tracing activity.

#### **How long should contact tracing information be retained?**

Symptoms of COVID-19 may take up to 14 days to appear, and further time may elapse before they are diagnosed, and the contact tracing team get in touch. Attendance records should therefore be kept for 21-28 days before being securely disposed of.

### **Liabilities of incumbents and select vestries**

#### **Are incumbents and/or members of select vestries taking on additional liabilities by signing forms contained in the protocols?**

Ecclesiastical Insurance have advised that no additional insurance cover is required in relation to COVID-19. However, clergy, select vestries, and parishioners should adhere to government guidelines at all times.

### **Non-worship use of church buildings**

#### **Can parishes allow third parties to use parish buildings?**

Third parties can be permitted to use parish buildings provided they adhere to government guidelines and provided they have appropriate insurance cover in place. It is advisable that the parish obtains a copy of any third party's insurance policy which should be shared with the parish insurers to ensure that the third party has adequate insurance cover.

#### **Can a parish use church buildings for purposes other than for worship?**

A parish must adhere to government guidelines in determining whether to permit members of the parish to use a church building for a purpose other than for worship. The parish is advised that if meetings can be held remotely, then this should be preferred means of meeting rather than encouraging people to congregate to meet in person.

### **Providing online worship opportunities**

#### **What are the most important overall priorities to consider for online worship?**

Five steps:

1. Do you have the resources to provide online services?
2. Consider whether pre-recorded services or live streaming of services is preferable
3. Consider whether advertising be displayed when your service is streamed
4. Ensure that you have the relevant copyright licences
5. Consult and follow the Church's guidance on safeguarding and data protection

All child and adult safeguarding policies apply online as much as in everyday life.

#### **How can a parish organise a simple service without needing to seek copyright permission?**

A parish will need to do five things to put this type of service together:

1. Arrange for a licensed clergy person or reader to lead the service
2. Arrange a camera/sound recorder and editor and equipment
3. Consider whether music will be included
4. If so, decide if it will be music performed for the parish or from a recording
5. Check whether a copyright licence is needed

Recorded Church Music is for use in situations in which a musician is unavailable; electronic copies can be obtained from Canon Peter Thompson at [donaghmore@armagh.anglican.org](mailto:donaghmore@armagh.anglican.org)

### **How can we use a performance of music as part of an online service?**

The best approach is to ask a local musician to perform music for the parish or diocese or to use the hymns from Recorded Church Music. A local musician will hold the performing rights for his/her performance of the music. For Recorded Church Music, free use is permitted by the Church, so no performance rights licence is required.

### **What licences will we need?**

Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) is responsible for licensing most hymns and songs in the *Church Hymnal* and *Thanks & Praise*. A parish or diocese must have the following licences in place before using a copyrighted hymn or song, listed with CCLI, as part of its online worship:

1. Church copyright licence
2. Streaming licence
3. Music reproduction licence

These licences are available for either jurisdiction on the island at the following links:

[CCLI UK – for Northern Ireland](#)

[CCLI Ireland – for the Republic of Ireland](#)

One License covers an additional range of church and choral music which is not listed with CCLI. Its copyright licences for the UK and Republic of Ireland are available [here](#). Where music is not covered by CCLI or One License, permission should be sought directly from the copyright owner.

### **What about music from CDs or the internet?**

For music – other than Recorded Church Music – which has been recorded commercially, parishes are advised that even where they have received permission from the copyright owner, services which include this music may be removed from a social media platform (as the company will not have sight of correspondence between the parish and the copyright owner). It is therefore always advisable that parishes and dioceses ask local musicians to perform and provide music for online services (or alternatively use Recorded Church Music) – and obtain the relevant copyright licences.

### **Where can I find more information on copyright and online worship?**

A full guide is available at: [www.ireland.anglican.org/online-services-guidance](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/online-services-guidance)

For further questions, please contact Eddie Hallissey at [eddie.hallissey@rcbdub.org](mailto:eddie.hallissey@rcbdub.org)