



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Questions relating to the Government's most recent Covid-19 Measures

REVISED 1 DECEMBER 2020

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Q 1. Will our churches be affected by local 'lockdowns' or the 3-tiered system of local Covid-19 Alert Levels introduced by the government in England?

No. Currently places of worship and our ability to use churches for the celebration of Mass, other Sacraments, or private prayer are not affected by the 3-tiered system of local Covid-19 Alert Levels. However, this may be further changed by the government and we should at all times maintain the social distancing, face-covering, hand sanitisation and other safety requirements in place in our churches. It is important to remember that strict social distancing must be maintained in our churches between members of different households¹ or support bubbles² at all times.

Q 2. Can I still have my child baptised?

Yes. You can make arrangements for your child's baptism by contacting your parish priest. Under the government's current Covid-19 regulations, if you are in a Local Restriction Tier 1 category area, the number of people (excluding the priest or deacon celebrant) who can attend the baptism will be limited to a total of limited to 6 people from different households (rule of 6 applies). If, however, your church is in a Local Restriction Tier 2 'High' or Tier 3 'Very High' category area, then attendance is restricted to the same household or support bubble.

Q 3. Can I still get married in church?

Yes. However, all the necessary civil and church preparations will need to have been completed. Under the government's current Covid-19 regulations, the number able to attend the wedding service and reception is restricted to a maximum of 15 people (excluding the priest or deacon celebrant).

¹ A household is a person or a group of people who live together in the same accommodation.

² A support bubble is an exclusive close support network between two households. It means you can have close contact with that household as if they were members of your own. From 2nd December, you can form a support bubble with another household, if at least one has:

- only one adult; (including a household where any children are under the age of 18)
- only one adult carer (i.e. living with any additional adult(s) in the household that have a disability and require continuous care)
- a child under 1 (regardless of how many other adults are in the household); or
- a child under 5 with a disability that requires continuous care (regardless of how many other adults are in the household)

Q 4. *Can funerals still take place in church?*

Yes. However, under the government's current Covid-19 regulations, the number able to attend a funeral Mass or funeral service is restricted to a maximum of 30 people (excluding the priest or deacon celebrant). **The number of people able to attend the Vigil of Prayer and reception of the body into church associated with the funeral is 15.**

Q 5. *Is the number of people able to attend Mass being restricted?*

No. Under the government's current Covid-19 regulations, there is no specific maximum number set which limits the total number of people who can go to a scheduled public celebration of Mass. However, under the government's longer-standing pandemic safety requirements for places of worship, each church building does have an approved safe maximum capacity number that is determined by its size, seating arrangements and the requirements for social distancing. This means that our churches do not hold as many people during the restrictions of the pandemic as they would do otherwise. You should contact your local parish to find out what, if any, arrangements there are in place which might require you to 'register' your intention to attend a particular Mass or other liturgical service. This registration will only be required to ensure that the safe capacity of the church is not exceeded.

Q 6. *Do I need to wear a face covering to go to church?*

Yes. Under the government's current instructions, all those who are attending churches must wear a face covering unless they are exempt from doing so as specified by the government. This is for the good of all who gather in the church for Mass as it is an enclosed public space where there are people from differing households who they do not normally meet. People attending a church should bring a face covering with them.

**✠ Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds**

1 December 2020