



Further Pastoral Guidance from the Bench of Bishops

Effective until further notice

Updated guidance

Since our pastoral guidance dated 24 March was distributed, the Government's guidance on social distancing and staying at home has been codified into law. The *Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020* contain many wide-ranging provisions, including legal confirmation that our places of worship must remain closed to the public. In light of the Welsh Government Regulations, we have made some minor amendments to our pastoral guidance, and this document contains the up-to-date version.

Church buildings

All church buildings remain closed until further notice. This means churches must **not** be open for public worship or solitary prayer.

Worship has been recorded and broadcast both commendably and effectively from parsonages over recent days. Whilst the Welsh Government Regulations now permit a cleric to record or broadcast a service (without a congregation) from church buildings, the desirability and advisability of doing so will vary between different contexts. Individual Bishops will advise further on this matter within their respective dioceses and any such events should be held only in strict accordance with those diocesan guidelines, or with the explicit permission of the diocesan Bishop.

The Welsh Government Regulations also permit clergy to visit their churches, and for other church officers and volunteers to visit churches only to undertake a voluntary or charitable duty, where it is not reasonably practicable to undertake that duty from home. It is therefore possible for essential and urgent site inspections to be undertaken by clerics, or by another person nominated by the Incumbent, Ministry/Mission Area Leader, Area Dean or Archdeacon. We ask that such visits are kept to an absolute minimum.

The use of church buildings for essential voluntary services (such as existing foodbanks, soup kitchens and homeless shelters) is permitted by the Welsh Government Regulations. Church buildings may also, upon the request of the Welsh Ministers or a local authority, be used to provide urgent public services. All reasonable measures should be taken to ensure that social distancing practices and other hygiene precautions are followed while those services are provided. Any new use of a church building for essential voluntary / public services should be expressly supported by the incumbent or Area Dean and the diocesan bishop.

Further guidance on the care and use of church buildings is being issued by the officers of the Representative Body.

Pastoral visiting

Clergy and others duly licensed or commissioned should exercise their ordinary pastoral ministry from a distance, by phone and online. Pastoral visits should only be undertaken where essential; such visits should generally be to the doorstep and social distancing measures must be scrupulously observed. Individual Bishops may issue more detailed advice to their clergy on what they consider to be 'essential' visits and may be consulted by clergy in any cases of doubt.

Funerals

Funeral services should not take place in churches at the current time. In this case, we are going a step further than legally required, but we believe that the wellbeing of mourners, ministers and other church officers are best served by this additional precaution. Graveside funerals may continue but should now be understood to be private funerals with no more than ten immediate family and friends in attendance, and with social distancing practised among mourners not of the same household. Clergy and others duly licensed may preside at funerals in crematoria, at which we expect numbers to be strictly limited by the crematoria authorities, with hygiene precautions specified by the authorities, and with social distancing practised among mourners.

Marriage

Marriages and marriage blessings can no longer take place in churches. If a couple wish to marry because of an extreme pastoral emergency, it may be possible to obtain an Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Licence for a wedding outside of a church, and clergy should discuss the matter with their diocesan bishop before then contacting the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faculty Office at faculty.office@1thesanctuary.com.

Baptism

Baptisms can no longer take place in churches, and should only take place at home, hospital, hospice or other location in case of an extreme pastoral emergency, where baptism may be administered by a lay person. The order for emergency baptism is appended below.

Prayer and witness

The duty of the people of God to witness to Christ is not diminished at this time; neither is our obligation to pray without ceasing for our communities and all in need. We commend all that is being done in God's service to care pastorally for our communities, and to enable worship, prayer and devotion to continue at home.

We continue to hold all who are anxious, all who are unwell, and all who are grieving in our prayers, asking that the presence of the risen Christ may be near to us all and give us assurance, peace and strength at this painful and anxious time.

An Order for Emergency Baptism

In an emergency, if no ordained minister is available, a lay person may be the minister of baptism. Before baptizing, the minister should ask the name of the infant / person to be baptized. If, for any reason, there is uncertainty as to the infant / person's name, the baptism can be properly administered without a name (so long as the identity of the person baptized can be duly recorded).

The following form is sufficient:

The minister pours water on the person to be baptized, saying

***I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.***

Then all may say the Lord's Prayer and the Grace.

Any person who has administered baptism privately in an emergency should make a careful record of the date and place of baptism and of the identity of the person baptised. He / she should forward details to the parish priest as soon as possible and without delay.

The parish priest should ensure that the customary record is entered in the baptismal register.

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O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Bench of Bishops The Church in Wales