

4 June 2021: Revised Pastoral Guidelines from the College of Bishops

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11.28

The College of Bishops is committed to supporting and guiding the churches of the SEC in their pastoral and liturgical ministry as Scotland moves out from pandemic. Guidance on the specific actions that apply to the use of our buildings continue to be provided by the Advisory Group for the SEC. In the current system of 'levels' the rules and guidance for all of us are becoming increasingly complex and, as we have seen, may be delayed or changed due to local situations at any time.

The vaccination programme in Scotland has changed the nature of the pandemic and may well have reduced the link between virus transmission and serious illness or death. But it is still relatively early days for firm data to confirm any improvement and the programme to fully vaccinate the vulnerable population is still underway. Please continue to take great care and make allowances for anyone who still chooses to remain at home and avoid contact with others. This will change, but we need to be kind and careful.

Over a year into this pandemic, we wish to repeat the same key message for all of you as you continue through the often frustrating restrictions and challenging uncertainties:

In all church life, please be kind to yourselves and to each other.

Even with a hopefully successful vaccination programme, the pressure and stress of the ongoing pandemic are immense and the ongoing timescales for relaxation of restrictions are uncertain. In all of this trust in God: and take care of yourself.

Pastoral Guidance

Frequently Asked Questions

Many pastoral issues are addressed in the 'FAQs' produced by the Advisory Group. Please access these at <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Version-7-07.05.21-2.pdf>

The 'level' system and church pastoral life

Annex A has a brief summary of the 'levels' system and what this means for social interaction and other church pastoral activities.

Worship

Worship is allowed for all five levels, given the restrictions outlined in the Advisory Group guidelines and the protocols at Annex B and C to this guidance. These annexes apply and give examples of how to meet government guidance for safe use of places

of worship: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/pages/overview/> . Annexes B & C have some slight changes in this issue to reflect the present stage of the pandemic. These changes are indicated **in red text**.

Many of us find the ongoing restrictions and changes in worship frustrating but they remain very necessary at this stage of the pandemic. We all find ourselves asking, for example, when the common cup might be restored or the requirement for physical distancing or face-coverings might be relaxed.

There are now relaxations on singing: levels 3 and 4 allow a single unmasked cantor behind a screen. Levels 0, 1 and 2 allow a small unmasked group, physically distanced, to play and/or sing. At level 0 and 1 congregational singing is permitted whilst wearing masks. We are now at a stage where there is a very real possibility that, along with singing, more relaxation of the restrictions may not be too far off: please hope and pray!

Annex D presents guidance for home communions and is essentially unchanged. Annex E has guidance for physical contact in anointing/healing/prayer ministry. Baptism by immersion is now permitted in the latest government guidance and the detail is now referenced.

Pastoral visiting

General pastoral visiting in levels 2, 1 and 0 can take place for anyone (not just vulnerable and isolated people) within the rules for numbers of households visiting in other people's homes for each level (Annex A).

Pastoral visiting and/or home communions are still permitted for vulnerable/isolated people if areas move to or stay in levels 4 and 3, with clergy/trained visitors and full risk assessment and safety protocols. This is 'essential work'.

The number of pastoral visits that can be made each day is not defined by government guidelines. Clergy or lay visitors should use their discretion and ensure they take care with their own workload. And please also remember, no-one should undertake any visits if they have any ongoing concerns for their own health or wellbeing.

Hospital and nursing home visiting remain subject to Covid-19 limitations. Please check with the nursing home, hospital or health board what the possibilities might be for visits to congregation members.

Meetings, Interviews and Other Business Activity

Other meetings can take place outdoors or indoors in 'public spaces' (e.g. church buildings) following the rules for social interaction in Annex A. Annex A also notes that in level 0 a phased return of non-essential office staff is permitted by the government guidance, so a phased return for SEC in-person vestry, recruitment interviews or other business meetings is also possible at this stage.

At areas other than level 0, online meeting should remain the norm.

There may be some vestry members who are anxious about the resumption of in-person meetings at level 0. This should be handled gently, possibly with a 'blended' approach where they can participate in an in-person meeting using e.g. Zoom and a laptop.

Outdoor church activities & events

At lower levels the number of people who can meet socially outdoors is increasing. These numbers are still limited and are unlikely to permit the resumption of events such as e.g. summer fetes or church barbeques

'Events' are now permitted indoors and outdoors with differing numbers at the different levels. Rather than reproducing this data here, the details of this can be accessed at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/> checking what is permitted for each level. There is a significant amount of organisation and management required for the creating and management of such events. The details are referenced from the link above. Please contact the Advisory Group or the Diocesan Office for more details or advice.

In Conclusion

Please continue to be careful in all you do as you continue to resume the pastoral activities in the life of our churches and take advantage of the easing of restriction on our shared pastoral life. In Province, Diocese and Charges: please do all you can to protect all those in your care. We must support and encourage those who wish to move quickly as restrictions ease. We must support and care for those who remain anxious and wish to be even more careful than the government guidance might allow. The pandemic has changed life for more than a year now: it will take a long time for life to return to a way of being together that is life-giving and in which all can be comfortable.

Please take to heart the key message to be kind to yourselves and each other in the hard ongoing work to support and help our church life to grow and develop as, God-willing, the pandemic eases.

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

- Annex A: Summary of Scottish Government Levels and Church Life
- Annex B: Protocol for eucharistic worship
- Annex C: Protocol for public worship with reserved sacrament
- Annex D: Protocol for home communions
- Annex E: Protocol for physical contact in anointing/healing/prayer ministry

Annex A: Summary of Scottish Government Levels and Church Life

The 'levels' system for Scottish easing of restrictions is accessible at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/>. This also shows what level any local authority area is in at any particular time. There is a complex system for numbers that can meet socially: this is summarised below.

Churches can be open for worship and/or private prayer in all levels, subject to distancing, face coverings and other risk mitigation assessments. The general risk mitigation assessments including physical distancing and face coverings apply to church worship at all levels.

The Bishop's permission is required for an SEC church re-opening for the first time in the pandemic.

Visiting (other than a cleric or pastoral visitor visiting a vulnerable person, which is classed as 'essential work') should follow the guidelines for social interaction.

Level 4: No social visiting permitted in private homes.

- No meetings are permitted in indoor public spaces.
- You can meet in groups of up to 4 from 2 households outdoors in a private garden or a public place.
- 20 people (or the physically distanced capacity of the building) can attend a funeral or a wedding.

Level 3: No social visiting permitted in private homes

You can meet socially in groups of up to:.

- 6 people from 2 households in an indoor public place such as a café, pub or restaurant.
- 6 people from 6 households outdoors, in a private garden or a public place like a park or an outdoor area of a café.

Funerals & weddings

- 50 people (or the physically distanced capacity of the building) can attend a funeral or a wedding.

Level 2: You can meet socially in groups of up to:

- 6 people from 3 households in your home or theirs – and can stay overnight.
- 6 people from 3 households in an indoor public place like a café, pub or restaurant.
- 8 people from 8 households outdoors.

Funerals & weddings

- 50 people (or the physically distanced capacity of the building) can attend a funeral or a wedding.

Level 1: Congregational singing (wearing face coverings and physically distanced) is permitted in level 1..

You can meet socially in groups of up to:

- 6 people from 3 households in your home or theirs – and can stay overnight.
- 8 people from 3 households in an indoor public place like a café, pub or restaurant.
- 12 people from 12 households outdoors in your garden or a public place.

Other activities:

- 100 people (or the physically distanced capacity of the building) can attend a funeral or a wedding. It is unlikely that a church building can hold 100 people physically distanced at 2m but the 50 cap can now be exceeded in larger churches.

Level 0 Congregational singing (wearing face coverings and physically distanced) is permitted in level 0.

You can meet socially in groups of up to:

- 8 people from 4 households in your home or theirs – and can stay overnight.
- 10 people from 4 households in an indoor public place like a café, pub or restaurant.
- 15 people from 15 households outdoors.

Other activities:

- 200 people (or the physically distanced capacity of the building) can attend a funeral or a wedding. It is very unlikely that any building can hold 200 people physically distanced at 2m.
- Non-essential offices can return to work at level 0, so in-person vestry, recruitment and other business meetings (with the usual constraints on e.g. distancing) can start to take place.

Annex B: Protocol for Eucharistic Worship

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. <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/coronavirus-updates/> This Annex below 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 **during the liturgy**. If they (or any other aspect of the preparation) have been prepared/touched by a sacristan/assistant, 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. **In levels 0, 1 & 2, the priest can sing appropriate parts of the liturgy as long as 2m distancing is maintained.**

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. **This remains a major issue for our church and tradition in how we understand communion. Work will be undertaken to safely reinstate the common cup as soon as government guidelines make this practicably possible.**

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, **if they wish**, after receiving the bread **and replacing their face covering**. The president should avoid any

contact with communicants' hands. **If there is any contact, this is low risk as all hands have been sanitised.**

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 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 a 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 C, Protocol for public worship with reserved sacrament and Annex D, Protocol for Home Communion.

Vestments

To reduce the risk of infection it is recommended that vestments are not shared **in the course of a single service.**

Incense

For churches where incense is part of their tradition, the risk of use 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. **Coughing in a pandemic may also lead to general anxiety in the congregation.**

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 C: Protocol for Public Worship with Reserved Sacrament

The guidance in Annex B 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 **during the service**.

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 D: Protocol for Home Communions

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. **This last point makes sense of 'communion by extension'.**

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 B 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 (**container**) 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 E: Protocol for Physical Contact in Anointing/Healing/Prayer Ministry

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 **is now permitted by government guidance at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/pages/individual-and-congregational-worship/#fullimmersion>** .

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.