

Kidderminster Evangelical Church
Safe use of the church building during COVID19
for Sunday Services and Prayer Meetings

Introduction

The church will work in line with the government guidance given in “COVID-19 – Guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic”. The guidance applies to the whole premises of the church, the building, garden and car park. Outdoor areas are considered as part of the place of worship, not public or private outdoor spaces.

The church trustees have agreed a COVID-19 Risk Assessment and necessary control measures to seek to prevent, as far as possible, the transmission of the virus to people on the premises. The transmission of COVID-19 is thought to occur mainly through respiratory droplets and aerosols generated by coughing, sneezing and singing, being breathed in by others, and through contact with contaminated surfaces then transferred to mouth, nose or eyes by the hands. The key difficulty in controlling the spread of the virus is the “asymptomatic carrier” who can spread the virus without knowing it. So precautions must be taken assuming that anyone attending the premises could be a carrier of the virus.

The main ways of countering this risk is through rigorous implementation of two metre social distancing and through implementing good cleaning, hygiene and hand-washing routines. The use of face coverings is compulsory. Singing, loud talking or social contact between household groups is not permitted to take place on the premises. Baptism by immersion in water is also not permitted. There will be no separate children's meetings on the premises at present.

Attendance at the church premises

Anyone **showing symptoms of COVID-19** (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) **or having a positive test for the virus must not attend** due to the risk that they pose to others; they should self-isolate at home immediately with other members of their household in accordance with government guidance.

People **who are self-isolating** due to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household, or because they have been requested to do so by NHS Test & Trace, or in line with government guidance following foreign travel, **must not attend**.

Certain groups of people are **vulnerable** and may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are **aged 70 or older**, regardless of medical conditions. Individuals within these groups are advised to stay at home as much as possible and so not to attend general meetings at the church, although meetings specifically for such people might be arranged. **Shielded patients** are currently advised not to meet more than one person from outside of their own household, and therefore not currently advised to attend the church. People in these categories will need to decide for themselves whether to attend or not.

Anyone who is **not able to comply** with social distancing and hygiene and hand-washing routines **should not attend** or be brought to the church, for the safety of others attending.

Everyone attending the church premises are requested not to touch surfaces in the church, such as tables, pulpit, cabinets, unnecessarily whilst in the building.

Contact details

Everyone attending is requested to give contact details (name and telephone number), which will be safely kept for 21 days. Details will only be shared with NHS Test and Trace, if requested, in the event that it is needed to help stop the spread of coronavirus. Details will not be used for any other purposes or passed on to anyone else.

Prior to a meeting at the church building

The area of the building to be used for the meeting, including surfaces, door handles, equipment and seating, together with the entrance area and toilets, will all have been cleaned since the previous meeting held in the building.

The seating will be plastic seated chairs with metal legs set out in accordance with the 2 metre social distancing requirements between households/bubbles. The capacity of the main church hall is 14 individuals, including the welcome steward, the leader of the meeting and audio/visual system operator, seated separately at 2m distancing. This increases to a maximum of 22 people depending on mix and size of household groups. People should book to attend, by at least 48 hours in advance of a meeting, so that capacity can be managed and chairs can set out appropriately. Cushions will not be provided but may be brought onto the premises. They must be taken home again after a meeting.

In the event of visitors turning up at a meeting increasing the number above the capacity, church members, up to a maximum of four, would be asked if they are willing to move to an overflow area of seating in the rear hall where they should be able to hear with the doors open.

Windows and some doors will be left open during the meeting for good ventilation, weather permitting, and people should ensure they have clothing that is warm enough for remaining seated in a well ventilated room. The opening and closing of doors and windows should be left to the stewards.

People should bring their own bible for use during the meeting. Anyone not having their own bible should contact the pastor to borrow a church bible, which they are to bring and take home with them for the duration of the restrictions due to the pandemic. Hymnbooks/Song Supplements will not be used. Any food/sweets or drinks required by a person during the meeting should be brought by them and not shared outside of their household/bubble.

Arriving at a meeting at the church building

People should not arrive more than fifteen minutes before the start of the meeting and should not enter the building before invited to do so by the welcome steward. This will give time for final preparations to be made in the building by the stewards, audio/visual operator and leader to ensure the risk assessment is being complied with. People are asked to arrive by the time of the start of the meeting.

People arriving on the premises by foot should make their way to the main (disabled) entrance next to the car park steps maintaining social distancing of 2 metres from and not socialising with any other household/bubble as they approach and in any queue that there is.

People arriving by bike may leave their bike locked to the car park railings or take their bike down the passage beside the church building to lock it there clear of the fire exit pathway. They should then make their way to the main (disabled) entrance maintaining social distancing of 2 metres from and not socialising with any other household/bubble as they approach and in any queue there is.

People arriving by car in the car park should leave their car to make their way to the main (disabled) entrance to the church maintaining social distancing of 2 metres from and not socialising with other households/bubbles who are also proceeding to enter the church building. If there is a queue to enter the church social distancing is to be maintained in the queue.

People will be met by the "welcome steward" at the entrance. People will be asked to confirm that they do not have any symptoms of COVID-19 and to use their own hand sanitiser or that provided at the sanitising station. They will then be shown into the main church to their seats where they are to remain quietly for the duration of the meeting.

Any visitors who have not booked in will be asked to complete a contact details form and allowed in if there is spare capacity.

People are required to put on a face covering on entering the church building and wear it whilst inside the building for the protection of others.

People arriving who wish to use the toilet should do so before entering the main church hall, using the front disabled toilet. Social distancing of 2 metres should be maintained in any queue for the toilet. Cleaning equipment will be available to clean the toilet seat, tap and door handles before and after use. Children under the age of 11 should be accompanied to the toilet by an appropriate adult. Hand washing guidance given on the notice in the toilet should be followed and paper towels disposed of in the bin provided.

The offering box will be available for use beside the sliding door on entry to the main church hall. Envelopes may be picked up from the sanitising table in the entrance. People should take as much care as possible not to touch the offering box.

During the meeting

Meetings may involve prayers, bible reading, children's talk and bible teaching led from the front, together with listening to hymns played from the computer with words displayed on the screen. No singing is permitted because of the greater risk of producing infected droplets and aerosols from the mouth and nose. Quiet humming to the tune is permitted. The saying of "Amen" or other responses to prayers is permitted but should be done quietly not projecting the voice. People who are taking part in the meeting will use a separate microphone from that of the main leader. Microphones will be cleaned before and after the meeting.

Anyone who needs to use the toilet during the meeting may do so using the disabled toilet in the front entrance. Any queue for the toilet should maintain social distancing of 2 metres and not engage in conversation with anyone outside of their household/bubble. Cleaning equipment will be available to clean the toilet seat, tap and door handles before and after use. Hand washing guidance given on the notice in the toilet should be followed.

Communion during a meeting

The celebrating of the communion meal of the bread and the cup is permitted during a meeting in the church building. The bread and the cups will be prepared by one person wearing disposable gloves and apron. The bread will be cut into individual portions and placed in the communion plate. Individual cups will be used as usual. They will remain covered under clingfilm and covering cloth on a table away from contact with people in the meeting and from any area where droplets from the speaker may fall.

One server will serve, wearing disposable gloves, taking the bread plate around and placing a piece of bread into the outstretched hands of those wishing to receive it at their seats. The cups will also be handed individually from the tray to those who want to receive them when they are brought round. The server will remove gloves to eat the bread and put on a new pair of gloves for distributing the cups.

The cups will be collected immediately after use. They will be washed in the kitchen after the meeting by one person wearing a disposable apron and gloves. The cups, together with the cup holder trays and the bread dishes will be cleaned and stored away in the cupboard in the kitchen and not be used again for at least 72 hours. The communion table will be wiped and the covering cloths and tea towel will be bagged and taken home to be washed.

After the meeting

At the close of the meeting after a few moments of quiet people will be asked to leave the building quietly in the household/bubble maintaining social distancing of 2 metres from other households/bubbles whilst still on the church premises, including in the car park and taking all their belongings with them. Those nearest the front entrance should leave through the same entrance and those furthest from the entrance should wait till others have left or leave through the side fire exit next to the kitchen, again maintaining social distancing of 2 metres from other households /bubbles, until away from the premises. All personal rubbish and waste, tissues should be taken home or placed in one of the bins available in the toilets, entrance or meeting area. Each person should sanitise their hands as they leave using their own sanitiser or that provided at the sanitiser station.

People are free to have fellowship with others from the meeting away from the premises either outdoors in a public place or private garden or their homes but the latest Government guidance should be followed as to what is permitted. Currently people may socialise indoors in groups of no more than two households/bubbles and socialise outdoors in a group of no more than six people from different households; gatherings larger than six should only take place if everyone is exclusively from two households/bubbles. Social distancing should be maintained outside household/bubble. (Government guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>)

The offering box will be removed from the building by the person responsible, kept for 72 hours and then opened wearing disposable gloves. The offering will be counted, the Treasurer form completed and the cash and cheques banked.

Illness during a meeting

If a person becomes unwell with the symptoms of COVID19 during the meeting the meeting will be closed at that time. Unless urgent medical assistance is required, in which case the leader of the meeting will call 999, the person who has become unwell will be asked to leave first, with their household/bubble, maintaining social distancing from other households/bubbles and taking any belonging with them. The person will be directed to go straight home to self isolate and advised to follow the stay at home guidance, which covers NHS Test and Trace. This is found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection> If the person needs clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111 (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). They should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

Once the person who has become ill has left the premises everyone else will be asked to leave by their household/bubble and to return to their home. Each person should avoid touching their face and sanitise their hands as they leave. People do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or are advised to do so by NHS Test and Trace. If they do develop symptoms they should follow the stay at home guidance found online in the link given above. Individuals may think it wise to reduce their own contact with others, especially any vulnerable people, for the next seven days. The church building will then not be used for 72 hours after which the area used for the meeting will be cleaned thoroughly before use again.