

Kidderminster Evangelical Church
Safe use of the church building following lifting of COVID19 restrictions
for Sunday Meetings and similar meetings

Introduction

On 19th July 2021 the legal restrictions due to COVID19 affecting places of worship were lifted. This includes the following:

- All remaining limits on social contact are removed. People may meet with whom and with as many as they wish, both indoors and outdoors.
- Social distancing is no longer demanded in any setting.
- All restrictions on the numbers at and activities within weddings, funerals and other life events are removed.
- Face coverings are no longer mandatory in any setting.
- There are no restrictions on singing.

Nevertheless, as infections continue to rise, the Government recommends continuing caution and a gradual approach to resuming normal activities. The church also still has a legal duty under health and safety regulations to undertake a risk assessment and adopt reasonable measures to mitigate the risks of COVID infection. Good ventilation, diligence in hygiene, wearing a face covering in enclosed and crowded spaces, and limiting contact with those we do not live with, are all noted as beneficial behaviours. It is also recommended that churches make provision for those who are 'clinically extremely vulnerable' as they are advised to continue to avoid close contact and maintain social distance.

The church trustees have agreed an updated COVID19 Risk Assessment and necessary measures to continue to seek to prevent, as far as possible, the transmission of the virus on the premises. This guidance for safe use of the building for Sunday Services and similar meetings meets the risk assessment.

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) **should not attend. They should self isolate immediately and get a PCR test.**

Anyone having a positive test for the virus **must not attend** due to the risk that they pose to others; they must 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.**

This guidance mainly allows for personal decisions to be made concerning social distancing and the wearing of face coverings within the church and everyone is encouraged to be sensitive to and respectful of the choices of other on these matters.

Contact details

Although it is no longer compulsory, in order to assist NHS Test and Trace, a record will be kept of regular members of the congregation attending a meeting, which will be safely kept for 21 days. Details of name and contact number will be requested voluntarily from visitors who attend. Details will only be shared with NHS Test and Trace, if requested. 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 designated toilets, will all have been cleaned since the previous meeting held in the building.

Although the maximum capacity of the church main meeting area, based on the size of the room and fire escape routes, is for over 80 people, the current form of seating provided, of loose unlinked chairs, limits the capacity to 49 seats. Therefore even a meeting in the main church that is full to this capacity of 49 people would not be considered a crowded indoor meeting.

The seating used will continue to be plastic seated chairs with metal legs as this facilitates cleaning. The chairs will be set out in rows of four, with rows 1.5 metres apart and a central aisle of at least 1.5 metres. (See attached diagram) This means that a good measure of social distancing will be maintained. It is recommended that people sit within households and that a space of at least one seat be left between people of different households, but that will be for both households to agree. Anyone who wants to attend a meeting who is clinically extremely vulnerable or who definitely wants to be socially distanced by more than one chair space from others should contact the Pastor beforehand and seating in an area of 2m social distancing will be made available. Cushions will not be provided but may be brought onto the premises and taken home again after a meeting.

Windows and some doors will be left open during the meeting for good ventilation, weather permitting, and people should ensure they have suitable clothing for being 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, if possible. Anyone not having their own bible may borrow a church bible. This will be returned to a box at the entrance and not used again by others for at least 48 hours.

Arriving at a meeting at the church building

There are no social distancing requirements on arrival in the car park or within the building but people should be mindful of others who may still want to maintain a reasonable distance from others. Physical contact of handshakes or hugs are not recommended at present but left to personal choice, being mindful of the choice of others.

Everyone will still be required to wash their hands or use the hand sanitiser provided in the entrance on arrival at the church. The wearing of a face covering within the building is voluntary. People are reminded that the wearing of a face covering is primarily for the protection of others rather than yourself, so wearing one when moving around the building is a sensible precaution, removing it when seated.

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 continue to take as much care as possible not to touch the offering box or unnecessarily touch other surfaces within the church building.

During the meeting

Singing is permitted. As meetings are limited to 49 people the building will not be crowded and so additional mitigating measures are not considered necessary. However it is requested that people do not raise their voices in singing and if they wish to do so they should seriously consider putting on a face covering to prevent the possible spread of the virus via aerosols from their mouth.

Accompaniment for the singing for the present will continue to be using recorded songs and hymns with the words displayed on the screen. This allows for people on zoom or YouTube livestream to receive good sound quality during the singing.

Anyone requiring hymnbook will be given one and it should be placed in the box in the entrance at the end of the service and not used again for at least 48 hours.

Anyone who needs to use the toilet during the meeting may do so using the designated toilets, the disabled toilet in the front entrance or the rear hall toilets. The multi-cubicle toilets in the entrance will remain closed for the time being.

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 taken home to be washed.

After the meeting

At the close of the meeting people are free to socialise with others inside and outside the church, being sensitive to other people's concerns about social distancing.

Refreshments may be served and if so will be available from the kitchen hatch. Only those involved in preparing, serving or clearing up after refreshments should go into the kitchen. Those involved in preparing and serving refreshments must sanitise their hands before doing so.

All personal rubbish and waste, should be taken home or placed in one of the bins available in the toilets, entrance or meeting area. Each person is recommended to sanitise their hands as they leave using their own sanitiser or that provided at the sanitiser station.

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, to arrange a PCR test and to follow the stay at home guidance, which covers NHS Test and Trace.

Once the person who has become ill has left the premises everyone else will be asked to leave 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. If the person tests positive the church building will then not be used for 48 hours after which the area used for the meeting will be cleaned thoroughly before use again.