

COVID-19 Permitted Activities under national lockdown rules

Issue Date	Version	Issued by
7th January 2021	3.1	The House of Bishops Recovery Group
Updates on version 2.3: The information now takes account of the national lockdown announced on 4th January and which came into force on 6th January. Updates on version 3: Individual prayer in church and confirmation services are now covered. Further clarity is provided on services of baptism, confirmation and ordination which need to amount to 'communal worship' to be permissible.		

The Recovery Group has been set up to support the Church of England as government guidance changes through the COVID-19 pandemic. This document has been prepared with information available by the issue date. It will be kept under review and updated as the situation develops, with each update issued as a new version. The current version will always be available to download from the Church of England website via the [Coronavirus FAQs page](#).

The following information summarises how the national lockdown announced by the Prime Minister on 4th January affects the main activities related to churches by stating what is and what is not legally permitted under the relevant Regulations. Reference should also be made as appropriate to Government Guidance on matters that are not covered by the Regulations, in particular [the guidance on the safe use of places of worship](#).

Additional church specific guidance is available on the Church of England's national coronavirus [webpage](#).

Activity	Effect of Regulations
<p>General activity – NB the general rules are subject to exceptions, including the exceptions for activities in churches etc. set out below.</p>	<p>Nobody may leave or be outside the place where they are living without ‘reasonable excuse’. Reasonable excuse includes leaving home to attend a place of worship.</p> <p>No indoor gatherings of 2 or more people unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households.</p> <p>No outdoor gatherings of 2 or more people – except in certain public outdoor places, in which case 2 people may gather – unless all involved are from the same household or 2 linked households.</p>
<p>Public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held</p>	<p>Permitted as ‘communal worship’ provided that any person attending is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alone or • part of a group all from the same household or from two linked households <p>and must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group.</p> <p>A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p>
<p>Individual prayer in church</p>	<p>Permitted</p>
<p>Church service in a public outdoor place that is not a churchyard or other outdoor church premises</p>	<p>Not permitted</p>

Activity	Effect of Regulations
Travel to church	<p>Permitted.</p> <p>But people are advised to avoiding travelling outside of their village, town or the part of a city where they live.</p>
Weddings in church	<p>Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 6 persons.</p> <p>A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p> <p><i>Government advice is that weddings should currently take place only in exceptional circumstances, such as where one or both persons are seriously ill and not expected to recover.</i></p> <p><i>Wedding receptions are not permitted.</i></p>
Funerals in church, churchyard, cemetery or crematorium	<p>Permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons.</p> <p>A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p> <p>Related activities, such as the burial of ashes, are also permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 6 people.</p>

Activity	Effect of Regulations
Baptism and confirmation (in the context of communal worship, whether or not a regular service)	The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).
Ordinations (in the context of communal worship, whether or not a regular service)	The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).
Ministering to the sick and dying	Permitted on the basis that it constitutes work purposes or the provision of voluntary or charitable services.
Homegroups or other meetings taking place in private homes (including vicarages)	Not permitted.
Support groups on church premises (e.g. support for those who are bereaved or for new parents)	Support groups are permitted to meet provided the gathering consists of no more than 15 persons (not including children under 5) and it is reasonably necessary for members of the group to be physically present to be provided with mutual aid, therapy or other forms of support. Parent and child groups are not currently permitted to meet.
Provision of youth services	Not permitted.

Activity	Effect of Regulations
<p>Churches providing services involving use of the church as a concert hall, theatre or indoor heritage attraction</p> <p><i>N.B. this is the terminology used in the relevant Regulations. Although churches are places of worship, many also provide services such as concert venues or put on plays or seek to attract visitors on the basis that they are a heritage site. It is these activities that are covered by the above.</i></p>	<p>Not permitted.</p>