

COVID-19 Permitted Activities from 17th May 2021 under ‘Step 3’

Issue Date	Version	Issued by
17 th May 2021	1.1	The House of Bishops Recovery Group
Update from version 1.0: Following the publication of new guidance on the provision of youth activities the relevant section below has been updated.		

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 national regulations¹ that have effect from 17th May 2021 affect various church-related activities. All places in England are moved into Step 3 from that date. The principal changes from Step 2 are:

- People can now attend public worship in church as part of a group of 6 (as well as alone or as part of a household group).
- Outdoor public worship can take place without any total cap on numbers as long as people stay within groups of not more than 30.
- Weddings can now be attended by up to 30 people.
- Funerals no longer have a specific cap on numbers (but there is guidance on capacity and keeping churches COVID-secure that needs to be taken into account).
- Up to 30 people can attend support groups and parent and child groups (with children under 5 not being counted).
- Concerts and plays and heritage visiting can resume in churches (subject to requirements and guidance on keeping venues COVID-secure).

Reference should also be made as appropriate to Government Guidance, 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](#).

¹ The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 2021/364) as amended by S.I. 2021/585.

Activity	Restrictions under Step 3
General activity – NB the general rules are subject to exceptions, including the exceptions for activities in churches etc. set out below.	No indoor gatherings of more than 6 people unless all involved are from 2 households or linked households. No outdoor gatherings of more than 30 people unless all involved are from 2 households or linked households.
Public worship in church or other indoor premises where church services are routinely held	Allowed as a ‘permitted organised gathering’ provided that any person attending does so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alone • part of a group of no more than 6 people or • part of a group all from 2 households or linked households and must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group. <i>See the government guidance on places of worship for advice on capacity and keeping churches covid secure.</i>
Public worship outdoors	Unrestricted if the gathering consists of no more than 30 people. If the gathering consists of more than 30 people in total, it is allowed as a ‘permitted organised gathering’ provided that any person attending participates either alone or as a member of a particular group consisting of no more than 30 people.
Individual prayer in church	No specific restrictions. <i>See the government guidance on places of worship for advice on capacity and keeping churches covid secure.</i>
Travel to church	Permitted.

Activity	Restrictions under Step 3
Weddings in church	<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><i>Wedding receptions with up to 30 people are permitted in premises other than a private dwelling with a statutory risk assessment.</i></p>
Funerals in church, churchyard, cemetery or crematorium	<p>Permitted without any specific cap on numbers attending.</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>See the government guidance on places of worship for advice on capacity and keeping churches covid secure.</i></p> <p>Related activities, such as the burial of ashes, are also permitted provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 people.</p>
Baptism and confirmation (in the context of communal worship, whether or not a regular service)	<p>The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).</p> <p>‘Private’ baptism and confirmation (i.e. not performed in the context of communal worship) also permitted as ‘significant event’, provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons, a statutory risk assessment is carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus.</p>
Ordination (in the context of public worship, whether or not a regular service)	<p>The same as for public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held (see above).</p>

Activity	Restrictions under Step 3
Ministering to the sick and dying	No restriction, assuming that no more than 6 people gather or all involved are from 2 households or linked households.
Homegroups or other meetings taking place in private homes (including vicarages)	No restriction, provided that no more than 6 people gather or all involved are from 2 households or linked households.
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 30 persons (not counting children under 5).
Parent and child groups	Parent and child groups (i.e. groups for the benefit of children under 5) organised by churches and other charitable bodies, businesses or public bodies are permitted to meet indoors or outdoors provided the gathering consists of no more than 30 persons (not counting any child under 5).
Provision of youth services	<p>Permitted, without any specific numerical limit, if the gathering is reasonably necessary for the purposes of supervised activities for children or other persons who were under the age of 18 on 31st August 2020.</p> <p>See Government guidance and guidance from the National Youth Association on capacity of premises and other advice on keeping activities covid secure.</p>

Activity	Restrictions under Step 3
<p>Churches providing services involving use of the church as a concert hall, theatre or indoor heritage site</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>Gathering for purpose of attending a concert or play is a ‘permitted organised gathering’ provided that any person attending does so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alone • part of a group of no more than 6 people or • part of a group all from 2 households or linked households. <p>and must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group.</p> <p>See relevant government guidance for advice on capacity and keeping venues covid secure.</p>