



DIOCESE OF LEEDS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Questions relating to the Government's most recent Covid-19 Measures

(REVISED 12 January 2021)

Q 1. *Are our churches affected by the 'lockdown' introduced by the government in England from 5th January?*

Churches are able to be open during the 'lockdown' for the communal celebration of Mass or private prayer. However, this will be dependent upon local circumstances and some churches may need to close for public worship if there are insufficient stewards available to provide the mitigating measures needed for the safe opening of the buildings and premises. Similarly, if for any reason an individual priest is unable to celebrate Mass due to the pandemic, then it may not be possible for a church in every parish to be open. At all times we should be diligent in the use of face-coverings, hand sanitisation and social distancing (face – hands – space); these remain the most effective ways to enable everyone to attend Mass safely. Strict social distancing must be maintained in our churches between members of different households¹ or support bubbles² at all times.

Q 2. *Can I still have my child baptised?*

During this current 'lockdown', the request for a child's baptism should be deferred until the current restrictions have been lifted and a suitable future date can be arranged for the celebration. An exception to this will be when the Sacrament of Baptism needs to be administered to a child (or adult) who is in danger of death.

Q 3. *Can I still get married in church?*

Under the government's current Covid-19 regulations, weddings can only take place in 'exceptional circumstances' and is restricted to a maximum of 6 people (excluding the priest or deacon celebrant). An exceptional circumstance is where "one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover or is to undergo debilitating treatment or life-changing surgery".

¹ A household is a person or a group of people who live together in the same accommodation.

² A support bubble is an exclusive close support network between two households. It means you can have close contact with that household as if they were members of your own. From 2nd December, you can form a support bubble with another household, if at least one has:

- only one adult; (including a household where any children are under the age of 18)
- only one adult carer (i.e., living with any additional adult(s) in the household that have a disability and require continuous care)
- a child under 1 (regardless of how many other adults are in the household); or
- a child under 5 with a disability that requires continuous care (regardless of how many other adults are in the household)

Q 4. *Can funerals still take place in church?*

Yes. However, under the government's current Covid-19 regulations, the number of people able to attend a funeral Mass or funeral service is restricted to a maximum of 30 people (excluding the priest or deacon celebrant). The number of people able to attend the Vigil of Prayer and reception of the body into church associated with the funeral is limited to the members of one household or support bubble.

Q 5. *Is the number of people able to attend Mass being restricted?*

Under the government's current Covid-19 regulations, the maximum number of people who can go to a communal celebration of Mass is determined by its approved safe maximum capacity number; this is established by its size, seating arrangements and social distancing requirements. This means that our churches do not hold as many people during the restrictions of the pandemic as they would do otherwise. You should contact your local parish to find out what, if any, arrangements there are in place which might require you to 'register' your intention to attend a particular Mass or other liturgical service. This registration will only be required to ensure that the safe capacity of the church is not exceeded.

Q 6. *Do I need to wear a face-covering to go to church?*

Yes. Under the government's current instructions, all those who are attending churches must wear a face-covering unless they are exempt from doing so as specified by the government. This is for the good of all who gather in the church for Mass as it is an enclosed public space where there are people from differing households who they do not normally meet. People attending a church should bring a face covering with them.

**✠ Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds**

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