

DO WE NEED TO WEAR A MASK TO CHURCH?



YES PLEASE!

New Covid-19 NI Executive Restrictions and Guidance from 18th December 2020

Further to a meeting with the Public Health Authority and Executive Office late this afternoon, I wish to update you in the latest information regarding the forthcoming lockdown in NI.

While further written details are awaited, the Minister of Health has formally announced that during the new six week lockdown “*places of worship can remain open under strict conditions*”.

Our clear understanding is that this means Mass and other services such as Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals can continue to be held during the six week lockdown period beginning on Saturday 26th

December 2020

, subject to

the current strict conditions

which should be rigorously applied at all such events. This includes the following precautions and mitigations:

§ Ensuring that numbers attending acts of worship are limited to the number determined by the risk assessment that is in place for the building, applying a 2 metre social distancing rule.

§ Ensuring face-coverings are worn on entry and exit and during the entire service (unless exempted and for those leading from the front) – this is now mandatory in law.

§ Ensuring that hand sanitiser is available at the entrance of our churches.

§ Ensuring supervised entry and exit.

§ Ensuring that people are actively discouraged from gathering outside, before or after services, and are encouraged to maintain 2 metre social distancing from others at all times, except those with whom they are allowed to meet under the revised regulations.

Our clear understanding is that from the beginning of the restrictions on **Saturday 26th December 2020**,
for the six week period,
weddings and funerals will again be strictly limited to 25 people. Receptions will not be permitted as part of weddings.

It is also our understanding that 'Emergency' Pastoral visits to homes will continue to be permitted but strictly on the basis that it is in the presence of one household group only.

Particular concern has been raised about the risk incurred by singing in Churches, even when masks are worn. It is important to review your practice in relation to singing to ensure risk is minimised during this period as much as possible. The guidance issued by the Bishops' Conference should be strictly adhered to as the maximum that is permitted.

PLEASE NOTE IN PARTICULAR:

It has been clarified that the 8 pm 'curfew' that will operate during the first week of the lock down, will also apply to Churches. This mean that during this period Churches must be vacated by 8 pm each evening and all activities ceased by this time.

Further clarifications will be issued once further Guidance has been published by the Department of Health over coming days.

Yours sincerely

Archbishop Eamon

Gilford and Laurencetown churches can only accommodate less than 65 people in each church with social distancing. First come, first served.

Masks are to be worn at all times in church

Hand sanitizers must be used each time you enter the church.

Social Distancing must be observed at all times when inside the church.

Please do not stand at the back of the church at any time.

Please remember to bring your bulletins home at the end of Mass.

This will keep us all safe as we are unable to recycle them because of the risk of cross contamination due to the fact you have handled them.

We ask that you comply with our stewards' instructions on where you should sit.

Thank you for your co-operation in all these matters. It is very much appreciated.

The obligation to attend Mass during the period of the pandemic has been removed and remains in place until further notice.

Gilford

Mass on Thursday at 10.00 am and Sunday at 11.30 am.

Laurencetown

Mass on Friday at 9.30 am and Saturday at 6.00 pm.