

To all Session Clerks (also copied to Presbytery Clerks, Ministers, Interim Moderators and Locums)

Dear Colleagues,

Below is the latest advice on a number of subjects as we collectively steer a way through these difficult days.

Best wishes

George Whyte, Principal Clerk

Worship

It is hoped to provide a recorded service for the next three weeks, including Easter, via the Church of Scotland website and social media platforms.

Please continue to keep looking at the Church of Scotland and [Ascend](#) websites for the latest information. As previously advised, please stay in touch to let us know what training and resources would be useful at this time and to let us know what is working for you locally, using the mailbox faithnuture@churchofscotland.org.uk.

Streaming Local Church Services

A list of congregations providing a streamed service can be found [here](#) on the Church of Scotland website.

Some local churches across the Church of Scotland already stream their services online, and others are in the early stages of setting this up to meet the growing demand. For a list of some of those who are planning to regularly stream services through video, audio or catch-up, please visit our Kirk Services Online page.

During such an unprecedented situation for us all, it has been heartening that so many of you to have been in contact to let us know that you will be live streaming some form of worship service from now on.

However, with hundreds of congregations requiring support from the Church's Communications Team at present, and to avoid confusion, we would encourage those of you who are planning to live stream on a temporary basis to publicise the information on your own channels (i.e. social media/your church website/email updates) and to contact your Presbytery/surrounding churches to see if they can do the same

Please note that churches should not open for private prayer. See Professor Jason Leitch's video [here](#) on the Church's website. While guidance in England allows for this, the Church of Scotland's position is that buildings should remain closed. This is consistent with other major churches in the United Kingdom.

There are only three exceptions; for hosting essential voluntary or public service, such as food banks, or homeless services, for looking after the children of key workers through an approved local authority request and for the live streaming or recording of worship, which should take place with a maximum of two people present who maintain a physical distance and follow appropriate hygiene advice and best practice.

More detailed information on these can be found on the main Church of Scotland website at this [link](#).

Radio and Television/Social Media

The Right Reverend Colin Sinclair is offering a live daily reflection on Facebook at 10 am ([here](#)).

It is expected that there will be a reflective service broadcast on BBC1 Scotland at 12.15pm, on Sunday 29th March 2020; arrangements to facilitate this are ongoing.

Funerals

Sensitive conversations will need to take place with families and mourners ahead of funeral ceremonies. No funeral service can take place in the church building. These have been closed for all services.

Our advice is to arrange funerals over the phone wherever possible, to minimise contact. This is not as easy as meeting the chief mourners face to face but these are exceptional times.

In arranging a funeral during this pandemic, a minister or other worship leader must comply with government instructions and health advice. These will inevitably mean restrictions on the numbers of those who can attend the service so these conversations will need to be sensitively handled but the law must be followed. The attendance at a funeral service wherever it is held must be limited to immediate close family e.g. parents, or the spouse and the couple's children (but not their partners) and perhaps the deceased's siblings (but not their partners) and not grandchildren or cousins or other relatives or close friends or colleagues. Even with the small number, there is a need to respect social distancing guidelines for those who are not of the same household – no closer than two metres.

Make your own travel arrangements to the graveside or crematorium – do not travel in the car with the bereaved family or the undertaker. After the service, as difficult as it is, you must not shake hands or offer a hug.

Latest government instructions restricting social gatherings mean it is unlikely families will be able to socialise following a funeral and many hotels and restaurants are closed. Our advice to the person who has taken the funeral service is not to socialise at a purvey or wake, and to return home immediately.

Tributes can then be paid in other ways for larger numbers of people to engage with – either online, with a recorded tribute, or in a church newsletter – or given in a memorial service later in the year.

Weddings

Following Government guidance from Monday 23rd March 2020, weddings are cancelled. It will be necessary to postpone weddings to a later date when a greater degree of normality applies.

Stated Annual Meetings/Virtual Meetings of Kirk Session

Attached is the most recent guidance on these from the Principal Clerk.

Conclusion

The above is offered in the light of current information, and is of course subject to further public health guidance and directives from the UK and Scottish Governments. The situation is evolving changing frequently, and we shall offer further updates as information becomes available.



Church of Scotland

General Assembly

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