

Koinonia Evangelical Church

Registered Charity No.: 1077730

Covid-19 Response Policy and Procedures



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This document is for all service users including, but not limited to, Church Members, members of the regular congregation including children and visitors.

Since March 23rd 2020, places of worship have been closed. This is because of the global pandemic of coronavirus. In addition to places of worship being closed other strict rules and restrictions were put in place in the bid to reduce the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

Government guidance tells us the transmission rate of coronavirus has decreased due to the huge effort we have all put in to adhere to the strict social distancing rules and the sacrifices we have made in doing so. As such, they have set out an ambition for places of worship to re-open. They are abundantly clear they will only do this provided their 5 key tests are met and it is safe to do so.

This document seeks to provide clear and detailed information on how Koinonia Evangelical Church will be moving forward during this pandemic as many changes to our Sunday services must occur to ensure the safety of all who attend.

It is important to note our policies and procedures are likely to change frequently as and when guidance changes, and through our reflective practise. We will ensure we keep all service users updated with any changes.

All guidance that has been used to form our policies and procedures are included at the end of this document.

If you have any questions, please contact us.

Warmest wishes

Koinonia Team

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1. Numbers and Restrictions:

Gatherings of more than 30 people will be permitted but only if the space enables all parties to remain socially distanced, as set out in law. This will include places of worship and their surrounding premises.

In defining the number of people that can reasonably follow social distancing, the total floorspace as well as likely pinch points and busy areas should be taken into account (such as entrances, exits) and where possible alternative or one-way routes introduced.

Should our hall reach maximum capacity (this number will vary depending on the size of families from the same household who are not required to socially distance; and with therefore be constantly monitored by Volunteer 1); we will work on a first come, first serve basis.

We will also be live streaming our services on YouTube enabling those who are unable to come into church to still engage in worship and remain involved in the fellowship.

Whilst engaging in an activity in the place of worship or surrounding grounds, all parties should adhere to social distancing guidelines. 2 metres or 1 metre with actions taken to reduce the risk of transmission (where 2 metres is not viable) between households are acceptable. For example, use of face coverings.

Outside the building users should queue along the path at 2 metre distances whilst waiting to be welcomed and seated.

2. Communication, risk assessments and support for users:

It is vital to complete a risk assessment that accounts for COVID-19 before re-opening and failure to do so could constitute a breach of Health & Safety legislation, as could having a risk assessment with insufficient measures set out.

It is important that all users are made aware of the risk assessment and responsibilities put on themselves (for example being required to wear a face covering) prior to attending so everybody is aware of what changes are required.

Those leading the worship should remind congregants of the importance of social distancing and hygiene, including use of car park, queuing outside and within setting; also promoting "catch it, bin it, kill it".

Places of worship are encouraged to make their risk assessments available online where possible.

3. Adapting Practises to reduce risk of infection:

Order of Services:

It is advised that services should be concluded in the shortest reasonable time.

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Once completed, participants should be encouraged to move on promptly, to minimise the risk of contact and spread of infection. If appropriate, you should reconfigure spaces to enable worshippers to be seated rather than standing which reduces the risk of contact.

Worshippers should limit their interactions with anyone they are not attending your Place of Worship with, i.e. if they are attending a communal service with one other household, wherever possible they should try not to engage in conversation with anyone outside of this group.

It is recommended that, where possible, places of worship continue to stream worship or other events to avoid large gatherings and to continue to reach those individuals who are self-isolating or particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Shared items:

Items should not be shared between households and therefore church bibles/resources will not be available for the foreseeable future, you are able to bring your own bibles with you, and the bible reading will also be displayed on the screen.

Music:

There should be no group singing inside places of worship when worshippers are present.

You are advised only to play musical instruments that are not blown into.

Baptism:

Full immersion should be avoided; therefore, baptisms are unable to take place at the moment.

Offering:

Where possible faith leaders should discourage cash donations and continue to use online or contactless giving and resources.

Where this is not an option, cash should be collected in a receptacle that is set in one place and handled by one individual, as opposed to being passed around. Regular cleaning and hygiene should be maintained, and gloves worn to handle cash offerings where giving continues.

Communion:

Where food or drink ('consumables') are essential to the act of worship, they can be used, however the sharing of food should be avoided, as should the use of communal vessels.

If it is necessary to handle consumables as a part of a faith practice, those giving and receiving food items should wash their hands thoroughly before and after consumption, or wear gloves.

The person distributing the consumable should release it, into the hand only, in such a way to avoid any contact between them and those receiving it, or wear gloves. If accidental contact does occur, both people should cleanse their hands immediately.

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Other actions taken to reduce the risk of transmission should also be considered, for example, foodstuffs should be prewrapped, and a system should be in place to prevent individuals from coming into contact with consumables and any dishes and/ or cutlery other than their own (for example the use of shared bowls).

Speaking, singing and chanting should not happen across uncovered consumables (other than consumables to be used by the celebrant alone). Instead consumables should be securely covered, and prior to the receptacle being opened, it should be cleaned, hands should be washed or gloves worn.

4. Health and Hygiene including cleaning practices

Hand Washing:

On entering and leaving a place of worship, everyone, including staff, should be asked to wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or to use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available.

There should be signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into the crook of your sleeved arm if a tissue is not available.

You should provide hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to toilet facilities.

Toilets:

Toilets inside or linked to places of worship should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Steps that will usually be needed to make the use of toilets as safe as possible:

Using signs and posters (see Hygiene above). To enable good hand hygiene, make hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand dryers) are available. Communal towels should be removed and replaced with single use paper towels.

Set clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider the use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.

Keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open where appropriate and safe to do so.

Cleaning:

All surfaces, especially those most frequently touched such as door handles and rails, should be regularly cleaned using standard cleaning products. See guidance. Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this cleaning to take place, particularly before reopening for the first time. Frequently

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used objects, surfaces or spaces, including for example doorways between outside and inside spaces should be given particular attention when cleaning.

5. Children's Activities

Young children should be supervised by the parent or guardian. They should wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use hand sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered. Places of worship can help remind children and young people, and their parents and guardians, of the important actions they should take during the COVID-19 outbreak to help prevent the spread of the virus.

At this time due to our limited amount of space there will be no Sunday School; the church will encourage children to come with their parents and will aim to tailor the service to encompass the needs of all of its users.

A small designated area in the foyer will be assigned for under 5's, 2 members of the Sunday School teaching staff will be on hand to receive young children forming a small bubble, this has a maximum number of 8.

The Sunday School Staff will be responsible for cleaning the toys before and after use in warm soapy water and will not use soft furnishings or hard to clean toys. Should parents wish to stay with their children, this is absolutely fine, but they must socially distance themselves from the other adults.

6. Vulnerable/Shielding Users

Individuals aged 70 years and over attending the place of worship

Certain groups of people may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are aged 70 or older, regardless of medical conditions.

Individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household.

You should consider informing these groups in particular of the symptoms of COVID-19 and current stay alert and social distancing guidance.

The NHS has written to around 2.2 million who are considered to be extremely clinically vulnerable to COVID-19, advising them to shield. See the current guidance for this group. Shielded patients are currently advised not to meet more than one person from outside of their own household, and therefore not currently advised to attend places of worship. Those shielding individuals may choose to gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a support bubble with another household, they will therefore still be advised not to attend places of worship indoors. Advice for both the clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable is however advisory and they can choose how to manage their own risks.

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7. References:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>