

**THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES**  
**CORONAVIRUS – COVID19**  
**GUIDANCE ON CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION**

**During move from alert level 4 to alert level 3**

This advice note seeks to enable Holy Communion to be celebrated in a safe and appropriate way. It includes practical steps in the administration of Holy Communion.

Where either priests or parishioners have concerns about participating in a service of Holy Communion, it is important that no pressure is placed on priests to preside at Holy Communion or on parishioners to receive the Sacrament.

This advice should be read alongside the guidance ‘Covid 19 Opening Churches Guidance Alert Level 4 moving to 3’ is available on the Church in Wales Website.

**Q. Can we celebrate Holy Communion with our congregations in church buildings?**

A. Yes, subject to a number of important conditions outlined below.

**Q. Are we able to share the Peace?**

A. Unfortunately, in order to minimise risk, there should be no sharing of the Peace through physical contact.

**Q. What hygiene measures should be followed when handling the Eucharistic elements?**

A. Ministers should not speak over uncovered ‘consumables’. In practice, this means that while the president can speak the words of the Eucharistic Prayer over bread and wine that he or she alone will consume, bread that will be consumed by other communicants must remain covered until being distributed (e.g. wafers in a ciborium with the lid on or covered by a pall, or bread on a paten covered by a purificator or other cloth).

For the time being we encourage the use of individual communion wafers or bread that has already been divided rather than large wafers or loaves of bread that are broken and shared, as this practice minimises the physical contact the president will have with the elements. It is also advised that the president be the only person to handle the wafers or bread during the distribution, unless there are very large numbers, and that individual communicants should not pass around wafers or bread.

If others assist in preparing the elements before or during the service, then hand hygiene and physical distancing precautions should apply. Offertory processions where the bread and wine are brought to the Communion table are not recommended at this time.

Servers or altar parties should not be used at this time.

When the president takes the bread and wine before the Eucharistic Prayer, it is recommended that this takes place in silence. If words are said when the bread and wine are taken into the hand, only the elements that the president will receive are taken (the other elements being covered).

At the fraction (breaking of the bread), only the consecrated bread that the president will receive is broken during the words ('We break this bread...' 'Every time we eat this bread...') accompanying that action. The remainder of the bread remains covered. If other consecrated bread needs to be broken before it is administered, this must be done in silence or while the Agnus Dei is said by the congregation and after the priest has sanitized their hands.

At the invitation to communion, if the consecrated bread and wine are shown to the people, only the piece of consecrated bread or wafer that the president will receive is shown while speaking the words of invitation.

At the giving of Communion, the president receives Communion in both kinds. The words of distribution are spoken to the congregation, and all who intend to receive say, 'Amen'.

At the distribution, Holy Communion is administered in silence. The consecrated bread or wafer will need to be dropped into the hands of communicants.

#### Q. What elements can be offered to communicants?

A. At present, Communion should be administered in one kind only with no sharing of the common cup. The president alone should always take the wine, consuming all that has been consecrated; other communicants should receive the bread only, in the hand. As the Liturgical and Faith and Order Commissions have made clear, this is still 'complete communion'.

In order to minimise overall risk, intinction (dipping the bread into the wine) should not be practised.

#### Q. When should the priest and communicants sanitize their hands?

A. The priest should sanitise their hands before administering the consecrated bread.

Each communicant should also be encouraged to sanitise their hands before receiving the bread.

The bread should only be administered into the hand with care being taken by the president not to touch communicants' hands. If this does happen, both the president and communicant should sanitise their hands immediately.

**Q. Should the altar rails be used?**

A. We suggest that in order to avoid touching it and to maintain physical distancing, communicants should not come to kneel at the altar rail, but instead they should form a line maintaining two metres' distance to receive the bread, standing, from the priest. It may also be possible for the priest to take communion to people in their seats. The details of how this will be enacted will depend on the local situation, particularly the layout of the building.

**Q. How can the president maintain physical distancing when administering the bread?**

A. We recognise that it will not be possible to maintain the ideal distance of two metres for the brief time that the priest administers the sacrament. However, the risk associated with this is relatively low, especially if face-coverings are worn. Where either priests or parishioners are uncomfortable with this, it is important that no pressure is placed on priests to preside at Holy Communion or on parishioners to receive the Sacrament.

**Q. What about face coverings?**

A. All persons aged over 11 gathering indoors should wear a face covering. This applies to all activities and services within the church or church hall.

There are exceptions to the requirement to wear a face covering for medical reasons, and it is permitted to remove the covering "to communicate with another person who has difficulty communicating (in relation to speech, language or otherwise)".

Further guidance for the public is available at:

<https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-public>

and for premises managers at:

<https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-measures-be-taken-employers-and-managers-premises>

The priest need not wear a face covering where it is impractical to do so but they should consider a range of other mitigations to provide a barrier to transmission including increasing distancing, screens, visors and additional hygiene measures. However, when administering the bread, a face covering should be worn by the priest.

The public should be reminded of the requirement to wear a face covering and a standard sign can be found on the Church in Wales website.

**Q. How can we clean the chalice and paten?**

A. If the priest is the only person who will touch the chalice and paten both during the service and after, then they can be cleaned in the normal way.

If others may touch the chalice and/or paten, either during the service or after, then they should either be washed in warm water with liquid soap, or if this is not possible, stored safely on their own for at least 72 hours before using again, in case they have been infected with the virus. Further advice on cleaning historic items is available from Historic England: <https://historicengland.org.uk/coronavirus/historic-places/cleaning-historic-surfaces/>

#### Q. Can we reserve the Sacrament?

A. Churches which reserve the Sacrament may do so. The priest should place the consecrated bread in the vessel for reservation. It should not be consumed or distributed for 72 hours by anyone other than the priest who reserved it.

#### Q. What about Test, Trace and Protect?

The Welsh Government Test, Trace, Protect strategy sets out the approach to tackling coronavirus, testing people with symptoms in the community, tracing those who have come into close contact with people who have tested positive for coronavirus and protecting family, friends and our community by self-isolating.

All persons entering places of worship should be asked to complete a record of attendance which records their name, contact telephone number and date and time of visit but people cannot be required to do so. In the case of access to church halls or churches for permitted community activity and by general visitors, it is a requirement that attendees are recorded before being admitted. These records must be handled in accordance with GDPR to protect the individuals' privacy. These records should be kept for 21 days after the event and then destroyed.

A consent form can be found at [Test, Trace and Protect - The Church in Wales](#)

You should also provide a revised privacy notice and templates can be found at the same link. There is a version if you collect this information in advance online rather than 'at the door'. The 'online' privacy notice should be made available on your website, and the 'at the door' privacy notice should be available for inspection (perhaps on the table where people are completing forms and on the church noticeboard)

The new NHS COVID-19 app is intended to help in this process but is not mandatory. The system involves the creation of a site specific QR code which allows people visiting to use the App. See <https://gov.wales/nhs-covid-19-app-guidance-businesses-and-organisations> This system does not replace the physical recording of attendance set out above.

It is recommended that all public church premises (including churches, halls, offices etc) should display such a QR code.

Further Welsh Government guidance [can be found here](#) on how to maintain records and on compliance with GDPR.

Further information [about Test, Trace, Protect](#) is available here.

26<sup>th</sup> April 2021