

What has changed?

Welsh Government has now indicated that congregational singing may resume as part of organised worship indoors in areas of Wales where prevalence of Covid-19 is low.

Low prevalence means fewer than 50 cases per 100,000 people in a 7-day period. You can view the latest rates in your local authority at the following website <https://coronaviruscymru.wales/local-authority-table> - the relevant column is headed "7-day cases per 100k". Covid-19 rates in a local area can change very quickly, so the local statistics should be checked regularly. If you have reintroduced congregational singing and then the case rate in your local area rises beyond 50 cases per 100,000, unfortunately you will need to suspend congregational singing once more.

It is important to emphasise that the Government has not said that congregational singing is safe, but rather that the risk can be managed in areas of low Covid-19 prevalence. If you wish to consider restarting congregational singing, then you will need to add this to your risk assessment. All the existing provisions on social distancing continue to apply, and this would be a good opportunity to audit your current practice to make sure that (e.g.) physical distancing has not 'slipped' in recent weeks. Particular care should be taken to ensure that a full 2-metre distance is maintained between all households at all times. For this reason, we advise against singing in procession at this time.

Congregations must remain masked to sing. For those who find this uncomfortable, a number of places now sell face coverings designed for singers, with an internal frame to keep the fabric a few centimetres away from the mouth. If you have a large number of people in your congregation who are exempt from wearing face coverings, this would be a significant additional risk factor which may lead to you determining that it is not safe to resume congregational singing at this time.

It is also possible for an organised outdoor gathering to include congregational singing subject to a careful risk assessment and maintaining strict social distancing. Some churches (with the outdoor space to do so) have been moving outside for part of their service, and limiting congregational singing those parts of the service which take place outside. If this is possible in your individual context, then this is advisable, as we know that Covid-19 transmission outdoors is significantly lower than indoors.

Despite these recent changes, the Government guidance remains that raised voices, including singing, appear to be a risk factor for the spread of Covid-19. It therefore remains recommended that loud singing is avoided.

Church in Wales guidance on Music and the Playing of Organs, and on Opening Churches has been updated accordingly.

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