

# Weddings: COVID-19 Guidance

*As of 28 September 2020*

The Government has updated its guidance for Places of Worship. This is to ensure that social interaction is limited in order to reduce the risk of viral transmission.

From Monday 28 September, a maximum of 15 people will be able to attend the service and reception. People attending must remain within their groups of six and observe strict social distancing.

Priests should remain mindful of their own personal situation with respect to potential exposure to virus transmission.

## **The Wedding Itself**

The Government Guidance for Small Marriages and Civil Partnerships states that “From 28 September no more than 15 people can legally attend a marriage or civil partnership, even where this can be safely accommodated with social distancing in a COVID-19 secure venue. This is the maximum number for all attendees at the event, including the couple and guests. Anyone working is not included as part of the legal limit.”

[Read the government's advice here.](#)

## **The Order of Matrimony**

The minister should ensure his clear distancing from the couple to be married of at least 2m. the minister should explain the conditions of social distancing, of speaking with a gentle voice to responses in order to prevent aerosol projection, and that touching surfaces and people and items other than their own property should be avoided. Any service sheets provided for the congregation should be taken with them at the end.

If the bride is to be accompanied down the aisle to the groom, this should be done by someone from her own household or support bubble. Any bridesmaids should precede the bride ensuring they walk singly and at a social distance between them (unless they are from the same household or support bubble).

Music can be played at the wedding if pre-recorded, or an organist may play. Government guidance states that the use of musical instruments that require the person to blow into them is not advised because of the current uncertainty on air projection and viral transmission. There should be no congregational singing at weddings at this time. The use of music should not prolong the Marriage ceremony.

If members of the congregation are to read, they should either:

- Bring the reading with them on a pre-prepared sheet and then take it away with them
- Read from a lectionary after sanitising their hands, or wearing gloves.

The minister, before reading the Gospel, should sanitise his hands if reading from the Lectionary.

### *The Rite of Marriage*

The minister should remain socially distant from the couple for the Marriage Rite. He should direct all questions needing a response to them without raising his voice. The use of a microphone would assist. The couple should answer clearly, so that he, or the Registrar for the Marriage (or Authorised Person) can hear the consent of the couple.

The couple should take each other's hands, as prescribed by the Marriage Rite, at the direction of minister. He should not touch the couple at this point.

If a ring or rings are to be exchanged, these should be placed on a plate by the Best Man (or other person) before the marriage ceremony begins. The plate should not be touched by this person. The minister should hold the plate and bless the ring (or rings) without touching them and then offer them, one at a time to the couple at arm's length, withdrawing immediately to a social distance, whilst the words are said by the ring-giver.

The couple should not kneel for the Nuptial Blessing; the minister should simply extend his hands over them and bless them in the usual way.

### *The Registration*

The Civil Registrar, or the Authorised Person (who may be the minister) should have prepared the registration documents in another part of the church which is easily accessible to those who need to be present for the Registration.

All those who will be part of the Registration should sanitise their hands before touching a pen or a register. Social distancing has to be kept at this point and crowding around the table should be avoided. It would be good practice to have two pens, filled with Registrar's Ink, so one can be cleaned whilst the other is being used.

Photographs at this point may be taken after the registration is complete, but group photographs should have everyone socially distant from each other (apart from the bride and groom and those in households or support bubbles).

### *Recessional from Church*

The Bride and Groom should leave the church first and all those in the congregation should leave in an orderly manner to avoid crowding at doors. All should sanitise their hands on leaving the church. If photographs are to be taken outside, they should obey the social distancing regulations.

The minister should clean the plate used for the rings. Any discarded printed materials should be removed and bagged for disposal.

The church should be closed after the Mass has finished in order to clean the space according to the Bishops' Conference guidelines on individual prayer. If there is cause for concern regarding the possible contamination of clerical vestments worn during the celebration of the Marriage, these should be washed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, using the warmest water setting allowed for the fabric and allowing time for them to dry completely.