



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS – 10 November

(Information quoted in italics last checked 10 November)

Can we gather in worship?

As of 11.59pm Sunday 08 November the restrictions on gathering in worship are the same for Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria

Indoors up to 20 people in two groups of ten separated by 5 metres (households can sit together, but separated from other households by 1.5 metres)

Outdoors proximate to the Church up to 50 people can gather. The (one) faith leader is outside the cap.

Indoor religious gatherings have a maximum service length of 90 minutes, with a recommendation for 30 minutes in between services to ensure that groups do not congregate in front of and around places of worship. Fitted face masks must be worn except where leading worship (reading lessons and liturgy, preaching.)

A venue can only have one religious gathering at a time, whether indoor or outdoor and ceremonial participants other than faith leaders are included in the capacity limits.

A **COVID safe plan** must be in place.

What should be included in the Parish/Congregation COVIDsafe plan?

The COVIDsafe plan details the following:

- Ensure physical distancing and density limits (1 person per 4 square metres indoors)
- Wear a face mask
- Practise good hygiene
- Keep records and act quickly
- Avoid interactions in enclosed spaces
- Create workforce bubbles (will relate to volunteers also)

Click the [link](#) or go to
<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covidsafe-plan>

Information about the 4-metre square rule can be found [HERE](#)
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/four-square-metre-rule-covid-19#what-is-the-four-square-metre-rule>

Please also use the District Communication Plan in case of a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your workplace. Download [HERE](#)

Can we participate in Holy Communion?

According to the Chief Health Officers advice dated 27 October (28 October for Regional Victoria) conducting a Eucharist service is permitted noting no sharing of crockery, utensil, vessels or other equipment is allowed.

Can I sing at a place of worship?

The DHHS website provides the following information

Yes, but small choirs or singers should only perform in well ventilated indoor settings and must be limited to a maximum of 5 singers or wind instrument players. Performers must be 2 meters apart and 5 meters from the audience. Singing outdoors is strongly recommended.

Is travel limited?

As of 11.59pm Sunday 08 November there is no longer any restriction on travel within Victoria. The permitted worker scheme is no longer active.

Can a pastor visit a person in their home for pastoral care and/or home communion?

The DHHS website provides the following information

'Faith leaders (in our context, pastors) can visit homes to provide religious guidance, to perform rituals or for care and compassionate reasons.'

While record keeping is usually in the context of the workplace building environment, as a pastoral visit is in the context of work, record keeping should still be maintained – for instance in a work diary or calendar for contact tracing purposes if needed.

Physical distancing should still be maintained as far as is practicable with a person who is possibly mobility challenged.

And the current restrictions limit more than two visitors to a home so as far as you are able schedule home communion visits so the householder is able to comply with this.

Can lay workers or a pastoral care team visit a person in their home

There is currently not a specific clause covering a lay pastoral care team.

For caregiving see <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/caregiving-pets-and-medical-care-victoria-third-step#looking-after-family-children-and-friends>

The DHHS website provides the following information

'...you can visit an elderly parent or friend, either as part of daily household visits or if you are providing caregiving to that person.'

You can have up to two people visit you at home each day. Dependents can attend if they cannot be left unattended or cared for in another setting. The two people may be from different households and may visit at different times. This replaces the household bubbles.

When you are preparing meals or caring for an elderly person you should be aware of the risks of transmitting coronavirus (COVID-19). Older people are especially vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19), so it is important you take extra steps to keep them safe. You must wear a face mask while visiting and should wash your hands regularly.

If you are delivering meals, think about leaving a package on their doorstep without making physical contact. If you are doing cleaning chores or other housework, have them sit somewhere comfortable away from you while you work, so you are not in close contact.

Make sure they are feeling well and ask them if they have enough of their regular medications whenever you visit. You should keep at least 1.5 metres distance between yourself and others wherever possible. You should wash your hands often.'

While record keeping is usually in the context of the workplace building environment, as a pastoral visit is in the context of work, record keeping should still be maintained – for instance in a work diary or calendar for contact tracing purposes if needed.

Can we hold a prayer group or small group?

The DHHS website provides the following information

'Indoor religious gatherings or prayer groups can be held with up to 10 people per group (plus a faith leader (in our context a pastor), and 20 people per facility. Smaller venues are allowed a smaller number of people.'

Religious gatherings and prayer groups held at a private residence are subject to the private gathering limit. This means the household itself plus up to two visitors and their dependents.

While attending a religious gathering there are steps you need to take to keep yourself and others safe including not sharing food, drink or other items.

Can we hold meetings for the business of the congregation?

At this time there is no clear direction regarding 'business' meetings. For the present, the District advise to continue meeting by Zoom or other online methods.

When meetings can be held face to face again they will need to comply with the congregation's COVIDsafe plan

What about funerals and weddings?

The DHHS website provides the following information

'Funerals will be allowed with up to 50 people if held outdoors and up to 20 people if held indoors. This limit doesn't include infants under 12 months of age, or the people required to conduct the funeral.'

'...for the purposes of the roadmap and restrictions, weddings are not considered as religious ceremonies or services. Weddings are limited to 10 people including two witnesses. The couple, the celebrant and one photographer are in addition to the cap.'

Staying Safe general guidelines

- Stay safe by washing your hands regularly,
- wearing a face mask when you leave home,
- coughing and sneezing into your elbow, and
- keeping at least 1.5 metres from others.
- Keep your friends and family safe by meeting outdoors. There is a lower risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) between people if you are outdoors.
- Face masks must be worn by all Victorians when they leave home, unless they have a lawful reason not to.
- If you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) get tested and stay home. Stay at home if you feel unwell.

For more information on the easing of restrictions for Religion and Ceremony click the link [HERE](#) or go to <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/religion-and-ceremony-third-step>