

Coronavirus

COVID-19

Funerals

The death of a loved one is a very sad and emotional time for families and friends of the deceased. Much comfort is often gained through the support of family and friends at the funeral service.

Unfortunately during this time of great disruption to the normal functioning of society there has to be changes to the way that funerals are to be conducted.

Below is the latest advice from the Church of Scotland. Please note three main points:

1. No funeral service is to take place within a church building.
2. Funerals should be held at a cemetery or in a crematorium.
3. Attendance at funerals should be limited in number.

Please also note that we shall treat every funeral with the dignity and compassion that would be shown during 'normal' times.

Yours in Christ,

Douglas

Funerals

Sensitive conversations will need to take place with families and mourners ahead of funeral ceremonies, and to consider the size of groups gathering for funerals. For the avoidance of doubt, no funeral services should take place in church.

In common with other denominations, we are asking you to consider whether funerals should be restricted exclusively to minister, immediate family, and funeral directors. In addition, local guidance from funeral directors and crematorium staff will be critical here. We should think instead about a simple committal ceremony at cemetery, or crematorium, with an intentionally very small number of people present. It should be noted that many crematoria have the facility to stream services and to host a recording of services for a period of time after the cremation service.

Tributes can then be paid in other ways for larger numbers of people to read – either online, or in a church newsletter – or given in a memorial service later in the year.

Of course this is not how we would normally do these things but these are exceptional times and we have to do the best we can to mourn our loss with dignity and protect the health of others.

Further advice from the Church of Scotland re funerals

The Scottish Government Regulations published last Friday list a funeral a service as one of the very few reasons that a church building can be open.

Those of us trying to coordinate our response to pandemic maintain that the Church of Scotland standpoint should be that funerals should not take place in church buildings. In the rest of the UK the Westminster Government says that churches should not be used for funerals.

Those of us responsible for framing the Church of Scotland advice/guidance which appears on the website believe that church buildings should not be used for funerals because:

we are not equipped to ensure detailed hygiene practices (beyond simple social distancing),

we should not ask volunteer or paid staff to be present in a gathering greater than the “two” which is the Government rule for all meetings and therefore increases risk to them and to others,

it would put staff or volunteers in the impossible position of controlling who comes into the service – the Scottish Government regulations of last week impose tight controls on travel and only permit people to travel to a funeral service in very small numbers and in very specific categories,

it runs counter to the general rule which is health based that there should be no services in church buildings thus sending the wrong signal