



Whitburn Parish Church

Policy on the authorised opening of the church for funerals during the COVID-19 pandemic June 2020

This policy has been agreed by the PCC of Whitburn Parish Church and has been formulated within the UK Government regulations of COVID-19 pandemic and guidance from The House of Bishops Recovery Group June 3rd 2020.

The PCC is mindful that according to the House of Bishops Recovery Group from which we take our lead, the decision to open Whitburn Parish church to allow for funerals to be conducted is within the brief of each parish council and that the terms and conditions for such arrangements are set by the PCC for that church and parish.

This policy document should be considered alongside the Parish Safeguarding policy, the Parish Lone-working policy and the appropriate Risk Assessment created for the purpose of opening the church building and allowing access to it during the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the rules and guidance set at the time of the publication of this policy.

This policy may be subject to change if the UK government and or The House of Bishops Recovery Group issue changes to the current regulations and guidance.

In preparing to open Whitburn Parish Church for the purpose of holding funerals we undertake to commit to the following:

- 1.1 We will deep-clean the interior of the church building, principally the main body of the building.
- 1.2 Produce a plan of the building that demarcates which areas are accessible to those who attend for funerals. There will be a maximum of 30 places available for mourners to include the priest and the vergers. The 2-metre distancing rule will be applied to seating for all mourners except where they live together in the same household. Under these circumstances those from the same household may sit together in the same row if they wish.
- 1.3 We will produce a document that sets out the basis of how funerals here at Whitburn Parish Church can be safely delivered for the benefit of mourners, Funeral Directors, their staff and the representatives of the church.
- 1.4 We will produce a set of protocols to be communicated between Whitburn Parish Church, the Funeral Director and the family of the deceased person to ensure that the funeral service within Whitburn Parish Church is carried out in a safe and sympathetic manner respecting the dignity of the family and the expectations and responsibilities of Whitburn Parish Church held responsible by the UK government and The House of Bishops Recovery Group.
- 1.5 Ensure that the areas used for funerals are thoroughly disinfected before opening and after closure of the building.
- 1.6 Ensure that a clear route of entry and exit are in place, signposted and followed by those using the church building.



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- 1.7 Create and implement a protocol for those managing the building for funerals which clearly states how public access is to be managed.
 - 1.8 Create a rota for the managing of the building during times of funerals which will allow for two people to be present for the duration of the opening of the building.
 - 1.9 Ensure that each of these people will have a mobile telephone in case of emergency.
 - 1.10 Demarcate areas of seating to accommodate up to fifteen people.
 - 1.11 Create a system whereby mourners will sit in one allocated place and that when that place has been vacated, it will be closed off for use until after a disinfection process has been completed and a period of 72 hours has lapsed. This will help to reduce the risk of contamination.
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- 2.1 Individual service sheets will be provided to those attending funerals and these may be taken away or disposed of in a bin held at the exit door of the building.
 - 2.2 Hand sanitiser will be available at the entrance and exit doors of the building and it will be expected that upon entering and leaving mourners should make use of these.
 - 2.3 Clear signage will allow visitors to find their seat and those supervising the building will monitor this and assist where necessary.
 - 2.4 Unfortunately, toilet access is not available during this time.
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- 3.1 It is incumbent upon any individual attending funerals to avoid any disturbance or distraction of others using the provision. The PCC are offering the opportunity for funerals and seek to respect the dignity of the family of the deceased person and other mourners. Any conversations that would detract from this anywhere in the building is considered unacceptable.
 - 3.2 No more than the agreed number of fifteen people will be allowed into the church at any one time as the COVID-19 access plan for the building will not allow this for funerals. In addition to funerals, Whitburn Parish Church also caters for the provision of Private Prayer at other times during the week and thus space for both purposes need to be accommodated; this places restrictions upon access to safe seating spaces within the building.
 - 3.3 Once the agreed number of 30 people have entered the building for the funeral, then the building will be closed to further access. Any persons attempting to enter the building should be mindful of the risk to detracting from the dignity of the service and may cause upset to the family of the deceased,



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3.4 Where there is a dispute regarding this, the persons supervising the church building are empowered by the PCC under the guidance from the House of Bishops Recovery Group to have the final say in preventing any people access to the building over the number agreed by the PCC.

3.5 A record of numbers of people attending the session of private prayer will be recorded although names and any other personal details pertaining to those attending will not be kept.

3.6 The coffin and the immediate family will exit the church by the main South door but other mourners will be required to leave by the North door.

4.1 At the end of the period of opening for the funeral, those supervising the building will disinfect entrance and exit doors prior to closing and locking them.

4.2 They will then work back in disinfecting surfaces used during the opening period.

4.3 They will be required to empty any waste into a pre-prepared plastic bin liner for disposal off-site.

4.4 Upon completing the cleaning regime the supervisors will sanitise their hands and then leave and lock the building.

4.5 Should those who wish to use the building for private prayer or who have used the building for that purpose wish to discuss any matter relating to this, they should contact our Priest-In-Charge Reverend Vernon Cuthbert via the email: priest@whitburnparishchurch.co.uk or speak with any of the churchwardens, John Shield or Michael O'Brien or our with our Verger Lorraine Hood.

This policy was agreed by the PCC in June 2020

It will be reviewed if and when any further instruction from either the UK government or The House of Bishops Recovery Group has been issued.

Michael O'Brien
Churchwarden