

Practical guidance for funerals

In this exceptional time, the Government's guidance on social distancing and self-isolation will have a major impact on all aspects of everyday life, including the way funerals will be conducted for the immediate future. Christian funerals will continue in the Church of England but inevitably there will be some adaptations to protect everyone.

This means funerals can go ahead, but they may be different from what might normally be expected.

Before the funeral

It is advised that meetings between the bereaved and the person taking the funeral (officiant) are held by telephone, skype etc rather than face-to-face. If meetings can only be held in person, social distancing guidance will be followed.

Planning the funeral

Although this will be very difficult for everyone, numbers of those attending the funeral will have to be kept to a minimum – we advise immediate family only. This should also be communicated to anyone in the wider circle of friends, family or colleagues in advance. Sadly, those over the age of 70 and those with an underlying health condition are strongly discouraged from attending in the present circumstances.

Any changes to the normal service will be explained by the officiant to the family.

Where family relatives or friends are unable to attend a funeral service, clergy can still take a funeral at the graveside or crematorium, even if those present are limited to clergy and funeral directors.

Consider whether a memorial service could be held at some point in the future, which is an opportunity for more people to come together once Government guidance permits.

Those who are self-isolating may be offered the opportunity to join the service via a system such as Skype or another audio link. Failing this, a recording could be made which can be sent to anyone unable to attend after the service.

Where no audio link can be achieved, officiants may be able to provide an order of service, either by email or post.

No additional people should be expected to attend the service, such as an organist, verger, sound system operator etc.

During the funeral

Everyone attending the service must adhere to [Government guidance on social distancing](#). Please follow the directions of the officiant and funeral director if you are attending a service.

While naturally those present may wish to shake hands or hug, all present should refrain from doing so in light of guidance on physical distancing.

After the funeral

In keeping with the recommendations to limit social gatherings, there should not be a wake or other gathering after the funeral, although it may be possible to hold a gathering at a later date.

If you are organising the funeral of a loved one, we are acutely aware of what a difficult time this will be. We will do our best to explain any changes or delays which may be an inevitable consequence of the current restrictions – for example, to the burial of ashes – but

we are here to support you and to ensure a Christian funeral and burial can still be provided.

From [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for churches, FAQs](#), dated Friday 20 March at 11:40. Check the official page for any subsequent changes.