

## COVID-19 Advice on Ordinations and Consecrations

Issue Date	Version	Issued by
12 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	4.5	The House of Bishops Recovery Group
Updates from version 4.4: on the 5 <sup>th</sup> January a new national lockdown came into force and this document has been revised to take account of the new restrictions.		

*The Recovery Group has been set up to support the Church of England as government guidance changes through the COVID-19 pandemic. This document has been prepared with information available by the issue date and is for planning purposes only until present restrictions are lifted. It will be kept under review and updated as the situation develops, with each update issued as a new version. The current version will always be available to download from the Church of England website via the [Coronavirus FAQs page](#).*

### Face coverings

In England, face coverings are required by law in places of worship, and in other public indoor settings. There are valid exemptions for some individuals and groups to not wear a face covering (see our [guidance on face coverings](#) for details).

In particular, those who are officiating at services and presiding at Holy Communion, and those who assist them (for instance by reading, preaching, or leading prayers) do not always need to wear a face covering, although one should be worn especially if physical distancing cannot be maintained (i.e. if gathered at the font). This exemption does not apply to worshippers, who should wear face coverings consistent with the requirements for any other public space.

[Government guidance](#) indicates some health, age, or equality reasons for which people may not be expected to wear face coverings. We encourage clergy and ministers to be sensitive to the needs of those who rely on lip reading, facial expressions, or clear sound.

*This guidance should be read in conjunction with the guidance for Public Worship and Holy Communion available [here](#).*

### Choosing dates for ordinations in 2021

1. Ordinations are understood to be intentionally public occasions, even if tickets are used to control numbers in modern times. They should therefore take place only when public worship in churches and cathedrals is permitted and when and where it is safe for them to take place.
2. Recent practice in the Church of England is for most ordinations to be scheduled for Petertide (around 29 June) or Michaelmas (around 29 September), although those are only two of the options envisaged by Canon C 3. Any Sunday, holy day, or Ember Day will suffice.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> From Canon C 3: 'Ordination to the office of priest or deacon shall take place upon the Sundays immediately following the Ember Weeks, or upon St Peter's Day, Michaelmas Day or St Thomas's Day, or upon a day within the week immediately following St Peter's Day, Michaelmas Day or St

### Location, physical distancing and other public health advice

Ordinations may take place 'in the cathedral church of the diocese, or other church or chapel at the discretion of the bishop' (Canon C 3). This statement offers considerable latitude as to the choice of venue.

3. The attendance limits should be decided locally on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship, following a risk assessment in the same way as for ordinary public worship. As of the 5<sup>th</sup> January the Government has introduced a new national lockdown. Places of Worship can remain open and ordinations can continue. Individuals, households and support bubbles can attend worship but must not mingle with others and physical distancing should be maintained.
4. For ordinations that take place as communal worship, we advise that, while some venues can host large numbers of people with physical distancing, the numbers of ordinands and their guests is kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of individuals or households mingling. This may mean that dioceses will need to arrange additional ordination services to accommodate their ordinands. Appropriate cleaning of the venues will be required after each service.
5. Care should be taken to ensure, whether in the cathedral or other church building, that physical distancing can be observed, not only with respect to seating and positioning of the ministers, ordinands, and congregation, but also in terms of entry and exit control, WC provision, and hand sanitising.

### The assembly

6. In *Common Worship*, following ancient custom, in response to the enquiry of the bishop the assembly gives their consent that candidates should be ordained. The assembly must therefore be made up of more than simply those who have other direct parts to play in the service. Within present constraints, it will be appropriate and courteous to invite at least a few guests for each ordinand, also taking into account the need for representatives of the clergy and laity connected with the ordinands' ministry.
7. Processions may take place, though all must observe physical distancing both among those processing and with anyone else present.
8. In addition to the presiding bishop and ordinand(s), the following persons are required at an ordination:  
**Deacons and priests:** a person presenting the candidates (archdeacon or designate); the Director of Ordinands or designate who has been involved with the candidates' formation; the archdeacon or registrar to confirm that the ordinands have taken the oaths and made the Declaration of Assent; at the ordination of priests, at least two priests to lay on hands in addition to the bishop. (*See Paragraph 11 below*)

---

Thomas's Day, or upon such other day, being a Sunday, a Holy Day or one of the Ember Days, as the bishop of the diocese on urgent occasion shall appoint.'

**Bishops:** a person presenting the candidate(s); the Provincial Registrar. At least two bishops to join in the laying-on of hands in addition to the archbishop or designate.

### Laying-on of hands

9. The laying-on of hands is a significant act at the centre of the ordination and will have great significance both to the candidate and to those who support him or her. It is also the moment at which the greatest care must be taken with safety precautions, for the bishop lays hands upon the head of the candidate (not nearby or above it). Special care must be taken to minimise the number of participants in this action, to keep the contact brief, to ensure distance between those taking part, and to ensure that hands are clean and uncontaminated. The use of face coverings is **mandatory**, especially where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
10. In the case of the ordination of **deacons**, the bishop alone, as usual, should lay on hands. He or she should wash or sanitise their hands before and after each candidate.
11. At the ordination of **priests**, the bishop should be joined by two priests (and no more). To minimise the possibility of infection it is recommended that one or both of the priests who assist the bishop in the ordination of each candidate should be the same for each candidate. At least one of the priests should be from the presbyteral college of the diocese (who might be the archdeacon, DDO, or designate to keep numbers low).
12. The Ordination Prayer is a single prayer; it is important that any movement during the prayer does not detract from the unity of the prayer as a whole.<sup>2</sup> The typical Anglican practice of priests gathering in a large group to join the bishop in the laying-on of hands will not be possible in the current circumstances, and this practice is in any case of no great antiquity. Therefore, the bishop lays on hands first in the usual way, washing his or her hands before and after each candidate. The two assisting priests should follow suit, sequentially, observing distancing between themselves, and washing their hands before and after each candidate.
13. Other assisting priests or bishops who are present, and who might in normal circumstances assist in the laying on of hands, might be invited to express their support in the Ordination Prayer in other ways, for example, by stretching out their hands towards the candidates, or by using the invocation, 'Lord, send your Spirit' as a response at the end of each paragraph of the Ordination Prayer.<sup>2</sup>
14. At the ordination and consecration of **bishops**, the archbishop or designate and only two other bishops should lay on hands. The archbishop should lay on hands first, washing his hands before and after, and the other two bishops should do likewise, sequentially.

### Giving of the Scriptures

15. This is a necessary part of the service, whether after the Ordination Prayer or at the Sending Out. In either case, individual copies should be given with appropriate precautions which will include the bishop sanitising his or her hands before handling the Bibles to give to each ordinand. The Bibles should be handled as little as possible before the service.

---

<sup>2</sup> Note 12 to the Common Worship Ordination of Priests.

### Other customary practices

16. *Ministry of the liturgical deacon.* If someone is acting as deacon for the service, they may participate in the preparation of the table, provided that they observe appropriate physical distancing and hand hygiene – please refer to the advice for Public Worship and Holy Communion.
17. *Anointing.* Some ordinations include anointing, where the bishop anoints the palms of the hands of each newly ordained priest, or (in the case of a bishop) the head. This is an optional component of the service. If it is done, it should be done with an implement which can be thoroughly cleaned or disposed of, as for confirmation.
18. *Vesture.* Where ordinands are clothed in customary vesture during the service, they should clothe themselves, including placing or adjusting their stole. Alternatively, ordinands may enter in the vesture of the order to which they are to be ordained. At consecrations, new bishops may be presented with their pectoral cross, episcopal ring, and pastoral staff. Those giving these items should observe appropriate physical distancing and hand hygiene.
19. *Foot-washing* should not be carried out.
20. *Ministry of the Newly Ordained.* The newly ordained should not take an active role in the Liturgy of the Eucharist beyond receiving Holy Communion (i.e. should not prepare the gifts, or stand with the bishop at the holy table).
21. *Music.* Current government advice does not permit any congregational singing. A single cantor is permitted, observing social distancing. He or she may sing the *Veni Creator*, or it may be said.

It is now permissible for both professional and non-professional singers and musicians to perform in small groups to people inside and outside of buildings in line with the recommendations for physical distancing and hygiene set out by the Government in their [performing arts guidance](#). This includes those who regularly volunteer to do music and singing, as part of a choir for example, to perform as a part of worship.

Unless the singers or musicians are employed by the place of worship they should be counted as part of the overall numbers in the service.

Those assisting with worship through music or singing do not always need to wear a face covering, but face coverings or screens should be used if physical distancing cannot be maintained.

### Holy Communion

22. Ordinations take place within the context of a service of Holy Communion. As with all such celebrations at the present time, the appropriate [guidance](#) must be followed. This includes for Holy Communion, no physical contact or proximity of persons in the sharing of the Peace, and appropriate physical distancing and handwashing protocols.