

**Safe Ministry**  
*Safe People, Safe Places, Safe Programs*  
**COVID-19 - Church Operations**  
**Update: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021**

**Preamble**

The Anglican Church Central Queensland (ACCQ) remains committed to the health and safety of all staff, parishioners and the broader community. This update is in response to the revoking of Endorsed Industry Plans and amended Chief Health Officer Directives relevant to church operations. This update supplements previous advice from the Diocese and replaces previous advice where any conflict occurs.

**Definitions:**

**PPE (Personal Protective Equipment):** includes but is not limited to: Disposable gloves, masks as required, chemical or cleaning gloves as required, Hand wash stations & Hand Sanitiser.

**Cleaning:** refers to the mechanical action, using a detergent and warm water to remove dirt.

**Disinfection or sanitisation** is the use of chemicals, steam or other approved methods to kill germs.

**Deep Cleaning:** Deep cleaning isn't like your casual sweeping of floors or wiping your countertop with used rags. Deep cleaning means:

- Clean and disinfect all hard surfaces & bench tops including lifting and moving all objects on each surface
  - Clean and disinfect all soft surfaces
  - Clean and disinfect any electronic equipment
  - Clean and disinfect door handles, light switches and fan switches
  - Clean any ledges and picture frames
  - Clean and disinfect sinks, taps and faucets
  - Mop hard surface floors
  - Vacuum all carpet areas including under all pews chairs and other furniture
- \*\* Please note that steaming cleaning of carpets and furniture and cleaning of Airconditioners and Ceiling fans is not practical on a daily/weekly basis and would only need to occur if directed as part of a "COVID hotspot declaration".

**Contact/routine Cleaning:** Contact cleaning includes wiping and disinfecting high touch and high traffic areas between shifts or throughout the day during events. Contact/routine cleaning includes but is not limited to as door knobs, pens, chairs, toys, microphones, taps, toilets, table tops, elevator buttons, kitchen surfaces EFTPOS machines etc

## **Bare Below the Elbow**

- No Sleeves
- No Wrist Watch
- No Stoned Rings
- No Bracelets, straps or bands
- No False nails/varnish
- No Neckties or Lanyards



**Ticketed Event** Ticketed event only applies you are able to have a seating plan and sell tickets with allocated seats. An example would be a dance recital or concert in an auditorium. A patron must remain in their assigned seat to the extent possible while they are present at the venue or event. In the event of a COVID-19 transmission event, you must be able to provide contact information for the person who occupied the assigned seat to a public health officer. In addition to these requirements, the Check in Qld app will also need to be used and you need to follow the COVID Safe Checklist.

\*\*Advice from the Department is that as a rule, churches do not ordinarily qualify as ticketed venues.

## **Updated Directions:**

### **Outdoor Gathering, Building Capacity and Physical Distancing**

- Building capacity continues to be limited to 1 person per 2sqm.
- There is currently no capacity limit for outdoor gatherings.
- Physical distancing of 1.5m between people is required to be maintained for both indoor and outdoor gatherings.
- Maximum person limits must be displayed prominently at the entrance to church buildings and any additional identified areas of communal gathering.
- Parishioners should remain in the same seat throughout a service or event.
- Clergy, staff, volunteers, local parishioners and visitors should be made aware that they should not attend a church service or activity if they:
  - Are suffering from any cold or flu symptoms
  - They have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus in the last 14 days
  - They have travelled to or from a declared COVID-19 hotspot in the last 14 days
- Please note that it is no longer a requirement to temperature test visitors on arrival.

### **Queensland QR Code Checkin**

All Churches (including planned outdoor events such as fete's or fundraisers) are required to utilise the QLD COVID Check in app. QR codes were previously sent to every Parish. Please ensure that these are prominently displayed on buildings and at events. Where the checkin app is not able to be used manual contact tracing details must be gathered and securely retained for 30 days.

## **Weddings & Funerals**

Weddings and funerals held indoors can have whichever is greater:

- 1 person per 2 square metres; or
- 200 people; or
- 100 per cent capacity with ticketed and allocated seating\*\*.

Indoor ceremonies must have a COVID Safe Checklist in place and collect contact details via the Check In Qld app.

Outdoor ceremonies have no limit on the number of people who can attend and do not have to collect contact details.

## **Wearing of Masks.**

Masks are only required in our region where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

## **Hand Hygiene**

Hand hygiene remains one of the most effective weapons against the spread of COVID-19.

- Appropriate hand washing facilities are to be made available to staff, volunteers and parishioners where possible.
- Hand sanitiser is to be made available at the entrance of the church and in strategic places throughout the church to enable easy access to staff, volunteers and parishioners

Please note that local wardens are responsible for the appropriate provision of PPE, Hand Sanitiser etc

## **Greeting of the peace**

COVID-19 is spread through person to person contact. As such "Greeting of the Peace" shall be limited to verbal greetings only whilst remaining in designated seat or omitted from services all together until further notice.

## **Financial collections:**

To reduce the likelihood of infection via handling communal items or money collection practices will need to be modified in most cases.

- Local Wardens and Incumbents are encouraged to provide for contactless or electronic giving where possible.
- Local practice to be changed to prevent handing plate from person to person. Changes may include but are not limited to having a box or bucket near the entrance of the church where people can place their church giving.

Where cash or offering plates must be handled, appropriate PPE is to be provided including disposable gloves and hand sanitiser. Volunteers and Staff are to be trained in the appropriate use of PPE.

## **Administering Communion**

Communion is a beautiful and meaningful part of Anglican liturgy and worship. COVID-19 is a virus which can be spread through person to person contact or handling contaminated items. To reduce the likelihood of transmission:

- Good “Barrier Hygiene” protocols need to be practiced, these include but are not limited to those preparing communion using washed hands and/or hand sanitiser, gloved hands, and being “bare below the elbow”.
- Hand sanitiser is to be made available for all parishioners prior to and after receiving communion.
- Wafers to be handled and administered utilising disposable gloves. A non contact method of delivering wafers must be achieved to prevent cross infection via gloves.
- Communion wine/juice to be served in individual cups only. Common cup may be used symbolically only.
- Individual intinction or dipping of bread must not be practiced. Should intincted wafers/bread be the preferred method of communion distribution then the intinction is to be performed by the communion server wearing gloved hands only.
- Local measures are to be put in place to reduce the number of people who administer communion in any service, for example a collection point for filled cups rather than being handed directly by another person. Local arrangements must also be made for the disposal of cups, gloves etc once used. All new measures shall be communicated clearly to all parishioners.
- Consideration needs to be given to maintaining appropriate social distance throughout the administration of communion.

## **Communal Prayer Books, Hymn Books & Bibles**

Prayer Books, Hymn Books and Bibles may be handed out at the beginning of services. Each book should be cleaned with sanitizing wipes and page edges sprayed with disinfectant after each use.

## **Kids church and youth group activities**

To reduce the likelihood of infection person to person contact should be avoided as far as practicable. Communal sharing of resources should be minimised or eliminated if possible. “Per child packs” of set resources are an ideal way to reduce the risk of spread through contaminated shared resources.

- All volunteers must be trained in managing the COVIDSafe strategies and any training must be entered in that persons training matrix.

## **Communal use Holy Water:**

Communal use Holy water is not to be made available at the entrance to church buildings or throughout the church building until further notice.

## **Volunteers and rosters**

All clergy and volunteers may be rostered to undertake tasks where they are appropriately Safe Ministry Endorsed and for which they are adequately trained regardless of age or vaccination status.

## **Cleaning**

One of the key ways of protecting people from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is by implementing appropriate cleaning and disinfecting measures in each of our churches and other buildings. This includes but is not limited to:

- Surface cleaning of all “high touch areas” such as door knobs/handles, lectern, microphone etc throughout the service. Local Wardens and Incumbents are make arrangements appropriate to their local context.
- deep cleaning of the worship space must be carried at the end of the day including all contact surfaces, carpets and chairs/pews, sound desk/production desk, any ceremonial communion items, vestry, entrance area, extra chapel spaces and any communal spaces utilised.
- contact cleaning of seats and high touch/traffic areas should be carried out between services and throughout events
- Toilet and hand washing areas are to be thoroughly cleaned after each use.
- Any pens used for contract tracing or details gathering of any type should be segregated after use and cleaned and sanitized prior to being available for reuse.
- All rubbish bins should be lined with a manufactured bin liner to avoid inadvertent contact with contaminated rubbish. Bins are to be emptied and liners replaced at the end of each service, at the end of the day, or as necessary throughout the day.

Please note that local wardens are responsible for ensuring adequate cleaning is undertaken, as well as the provision and safe storage of appropriate cleaning chemicals/materials.

## **Hall Hire**

Church halls are regularly used for non-church related activities and meetings. Each hall hire agreement shall be reviewed in line with the activity being conducted and the health advice for that industry. Risk assessments and/or mitigation strategies are to be submitted for file, and the hiring organisation/individual is to collect contact tracing information for all who attend their service/activity. Hire organisations are to provide own PPE. Local arrangements are to be made for deep cleaning of the area after each use.

## **Food and Drink Provision and Service**

Gathering for fellowship after a service is part of church community. The removal of the industry COVID plans enables us to easily share food, whilst retaining sensible food handling and hygiene protocols. This includes but is not limited to:

- Using reusable cups, plates and utensils where they can be appropriately cleaned after use with appropriate dishwashing detergent and hot water or in a domestic or commercial grade dishwasher.
- Self-service of tea and coffee where contact cleaning is adequately maintained.
- Self service of food where tongs are used and contact cleaning is adequately maintained
- Bins are to be made available for people to dispose of own rubbish.
- Dishwashers are to be stacked and unstacked with gloved hands.
- All surfaces are to be deep cleaned after use.

Where food is being cooked/prepared by staff, clergy, parishioners etc they should have completed the TAFE Micro credential dining in qualification online. Please note that local council regulations may also apply in cases of fundraising events. Where food is catered by an outside organisation the responsibility for compliance rests with that organisation and not the church.

## **Op Shops / Bargain Shops & outreach ministries**

Op Shops / bargain shops and other outreach ministries continue to be a valuable place of connection with our broader communities. To continue to protect our people and our community from the risk of exposure to COVID-19 all cleaning, building capacity limits and check in protocols outlined above apply equally to our outreach ministries. Shop stock should be clean prior to placing in the shop, and kept clean through regular cleaning and sanitising processes.

I understand that COVID-19 protocols have been difficult and causing angst in some of our church families. Thank you to everyone for continuing to work hard to keep our communities safe.

Should you wish clarification on anything within this update please do not hesitate to contact me.

Your servant in Christ,

Jen

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