**THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES**

**CORONAVIRUS FIREBREAK LOCKDOWN**

**OVERALL GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL CHURCHES**

**What is the Coronavirus Firebreak Lockdown?**

Welsh Government has designated a Firebreak Lockdown. This means that a series of restrictive measures will be in place from 6pm Friday 23 October until 12:01am Monday 9 November 2020.

This means 6 main things:

* people must stay at home, except for very limited purposes
* people must not visit other households or meet other people they do not live with
* certain businesses and venues, including bars, restaurants and most shops must close
* places of worship and community centres must close (subject to very limited exceptions set out below)
* secondary schools will provide learning online only for the week after half-term, other than for children in years seven and eight. Primary schools and childcare settings will remain open.
* face coverings continue to be mandatory in the indoor public spaces that remain open (subject to certain exemptions and exceptions), including on public transport and in taxis

The legislation bringing this into effect can be reviewed at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2020/1149/pdfs/wsi_20201149_en.pdf>

Welsh Government has provided a set of FAQ’s at:

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-firebreak-frequently-asked-questions>

A specific guidance note from Welsh Government for Places of Worship is available on the Church in Wales [website](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/administration-and-business/COVID-19/).

Please Note: This guidance is to assist local churches with managing their buildings. It seeks to reflect, but does not substitute, Welsh Government legislation and guidance.

**What can places of worship and community centres/church halls be open for during this time?**

***Places of Worship:*** Places of worship will not be open to the public, other than for weddings or funerals, where people can attend at the invitation of the organiser. We have provided a specific guidance note on conducting funerals and weddings at this time [HERE](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/coronavirus-firebreak-lockdown). NB wedding receptions or funeral wakes cannot take place during the firebreak.

Places of worship may be used to broadcast (without a congregation) an act of worship or funeral, whether over the internet or as part of a radio or television broadcast. Weddings and funerals may also be broadcast from places of worship.

***Churchyards:*** Churchyards can remain open and people can continue to visit the graves of loved ones.

***Childcare/Nursery Provision****:* Childcare provision can continue. Children can continue to access their usual childcare provider and children can also continue to attend staffed play work provision, like open access play sessions. Thus, you can permit organisations hiring your space to continue to do so.

All childcare and play work providers, including Flying Start childcare, can remain open and offer their normal services, including provision through the half term holidays.  This includes childcare and play work providers operating from community centres, places of worship and school sites. There is used guidance at <https://gov.wales/protecting-staff-and-children-coronavirus-guidance-open-access-playwork-providers>

However, children’s activities where the primary purpose is not childcare (e.g. Scouts groups, parent and toddler groups, dance classes, sports classes *etc*) may not operate during the firebreak.

***Essential Voluntary or Public Services:*** Churches and church halls can be open to provide essential voluntary services, or to provide public services upon the request of the Welsh Ministers or a local authority. The regulations specifically allow – at the request of the Welsh Ministers or a local authority - the provision of food banks or other support for homeless or vulnerable people, childcare, blood donation sessions or support in an emergency. Churches operating, for example, a food bank, should **urgently** liaise with their local authority to obtain a ‘request’ to remain open.

***Building maintenance:*** Essential building maintenance and repair work can continue (as it constitutes work for the contractor) as long as it is managed in a safe way and all involved are well and have no symptoms of coronavirus. However, it is strongly recommended that people consider whether the work can be safely deferred until after this short lockdown.

Contractors must take all reasonable measures to ensure to mitigate the risk of coronavirus spreading when undertaking work. Volunteers who undertake maintenance work can continue to do so but consideration should be given to delaying such work if possible. It is suggested that only essential and urgent work should be undertaken at this time.

***Remembrance Sunday:*** Events, including services of worship, can be held to commemorate Remembrance Sunday provided such events are held outdoors on 7th or 8th November and have no more than 30 people attending. Social distancing measures should be in place at such events.

**In opening for these limited activities what do we need to consider?**

Yes. Your opening must be based on a written risk assessment approved by your Archdeacon. Please see our separate [guidance note on Covid-19 risk management](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/coronavirus-firebreak-lockdown) during this period.