



Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church

DIOCESE OF UK-EUROPE AND AFRICA

COVID19 LOCKDOWN -CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

GUIDELINES

**Issued from Diocese Office with the permission of
Diocesan Metropolitan H.G. Dr. Mathews Mar Thimothios**

DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES OF COVID19 PANDEMIC WE SHALL TAKE NECESSARY CARE FOR OUR OWN SAFETY AND OF OTHERS. FOLLOWING GUIDELINES ARE ISSUED TO THE PARISHES UNDER THE DIOCESE OF UK-EUROPE AND AFRICA.



Introduction:

In most of the countries it is mandatory statutory requirement that to carry out a risk assessment and appropriate guidelines to be issued to the attendees prior to opening the places of worship for public prayers. All the Parishes in the Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa should carry out a Risk assessment to identify the risks associated with COVID19 and adopt mitigation measures to control the transmission of the virus in our places of worship. A template for the Risk assessment is issued along with these guidelines which should be modified in accordance with individual parish circumstances and by adopting local government guidance.

If any Parish does not have own premises and we are conducting Liturgy and Prayers in a rented/leased place, concerned building owner's risk assessment and COVID 19 guidelines shall be followed.

Responsible persons:

All attendees shall have the responsibility for their individual safety and should be considerate for others safety.

Parish Managing committee under the guidance of the Vicar should take the responsibility to implement the mitigation measures identified in the respective Risk Assessment and items mentioned in the guideline document.

Guidelines

General

Instruction given by the Vicar, Parish managing committee, and Health and Safety volunteers of the Parish should be followed for the safety of you and of the others.

All the Parishes in our diocese must carry out a Risk assessment based on the Risk Assessment template issued from the Diocesan office and considering any relevant risks relevant to concerned parish. Accordingly necessary mitigation measures should be implemented.

Social Distancing

1. Social distancing should be maintained in the church building including in the Altar. It is advisable that to maintain 2m distance between two persons while entering, staying in, and leaving the building. If it is not possible to maintain 2m distancing, 1 metre + distance shall be maintained between persons at any point of time unless exempted in condition mentioned below point 2.
2. Administering and receiving Holy Confession, Holy Absolution and Holy Communion should be avoided during these periods of the Pandemic. If it is very essential such as persons in palliative care, someone in extreme distress or similar like, prior appointment shall be taken from the Vicar. In such situations, both the priest and the faithful shall take all necessary precautions. Body to body contact should be avoided and both the priest and the receiver should wear appropriate face masks and hand gloves.

Attendance

3. If possible, avoid attending Church during the time of the Pandemic. If decided to visit the Church, avoid public transport and try to use private vehicle. Do not attempt to share the vehicle with others living outside your house.
4. Number of attendees in the worship place should be limited to a minimum. To manage the number of visitors, all our Parishes should take necessary measures for Livestreaming /telecasting of the prayers.
5. Parish managing committee should define the maximum number of attendees allowed at any one particular time in the Church building. Necessary arrangements should be in place for pre-booking for the attendance and prior appointment should be taken for any particular day. The arrangements should be transparent and everyone in the Parish should get sufficient time to do the pre booking. If the Church premise area is not sufficient to accommodate all the members, a 'rota' system should be implemented so that everyone in the Parish would get the opportunity to attend Church within a shorter time frame.

6. All attendees should register their name in the Attendance register while entering the Church. A designated volunteer should carry out this activity in a responsible manner.



Use of the Church Building

7. Parish Managing committee should make necessary measures to:

- Display Posters and Notices for reminding Social distancing requirements and hygienic measures at appropriate places of the Church Building.
- Ensure that Entry and Exit from the building will be through different doors and no more than one person will be at any door at any point of time.
- Make prior allocation of seats will be given to attendees during the time appointment
- Provide sufficient quantity of personal hygienic materials and cleaning materials.
- Insist attendees to wear shoe covers, hand gloves and face masks. If not available, provided the PPEs at the entrance before the attendees entering the common place of worship.
- Arrangements for Toilets are thoroughly cleaned in the beginning and end of each worship service.
- Ensure that frequent disinfection of door handles, push bar and push pads of the doors
- Make sure that only limited area will be open for the attendees to access and rest of the areas will be locked off.
- Take measures that Chapel(s) will be closed for entering. Only limited number of wooden furniture will be kept in the building as per the number of attendees.
- No social activities, refreshments or any other functions except liturgical worship will be allowed in the Church building.
- Ensure that any wooden or metal items including microphones used/ touched will be handled by only one individual on the same day and he should clean it after the use. The same item will be kept in quarantine for next 72 hours before the next use by another person.

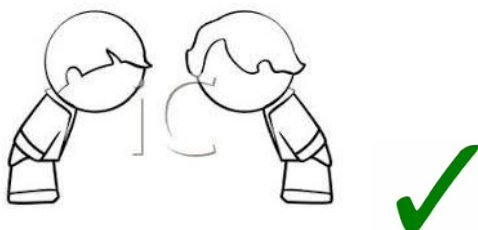
8. Attendees shall make sure that:

- Wear face masks, hand gloves and shoe covers

- Strictly follow social distancing of 2meters, if not possible maintain minimum 1m+ distance between persons
- Families should stand together /clusters.
- Avoid the use of common prayer books
- After every use, toilet seats and common places of the area will be cleaned
- After the worship service, all the attendees should disperse immediately and no socializing will be encouraged.
- Any wooden or metal items including microphones used/ touched will be handled by only one individual on the same day and he should clean it after the use.

Attending / Participating in the Worship service

- Attendees, Clergies and Altar Assistants should wear face masks while attending the service.
- No Choir service should be allowed for the service and Group singing and chanting will not be done. Attendees should sing/ chant /say prayers in soslo and in low pitch to avoid displacement of aerosols.
- Vicar shall ensure that only maximum three Altar Assistants will be permitted at any point of time in the Altar.
- Personal assistants to Priests and standing with candles, books or other materials near the priest within 1 meter should be avoided.
- Priests, Attendees and Altar Assistants should bring prayers books, any other materials for their use and should bring those back home. These materials should not be left in common places.
- If already installed, Oil lamp will be removed from the place of worship.
- Lighting of the candles will not be allowed for attendees
- Altar setting should be done by the Priest by himself prior to worship and no other person should prepare or touch the Sacramental bread, Eucharist wine, Chalice and any other sacramental ornaments on the Altar
- No offertory collection should be taken place as part of the worship.
- Members should be encouraged to do online money transactions. If unavoidable, money can be deposited in closed envelope in a dedicated basket which will be quarantined for 72 hours and then should be managed in a controlled manner by the Trustees in strict environment and by using appropriate PPE.
- Kiss of Peace during the Holy Liturgy will be avoided and instead bowing of heads will be practised.



20. Blessing given by the priest by touching will be avoided and instead wooden cross will be used without touching the body of the other person or a general benediction will be administered as per the discretion of the Vicar.
21. Unless it is very necessary, Holy Confession and Holy Absolution will not be given to faithful. If very necessary, Vicar shall be contacted and in unavoidable conditions, the Priest and the faithful shall wear appropriate PPE and face protections to carry out the sacrament.
22. Unless it is very necessary, Holy communion is not encouraged at these times of the Pandemic. Exceptional situations like palliative care and severe distress conditions, if it is required to be administered, only one person or members from the same family living together can receive Holy Communion in any one day. Necessary care should be taken by the Priest and the faithful that no body to body or body to material contact is taken place during the administration.