



Infection control supervisor

Industry standard for services and ecclesiastical acts in member churches Christian Council of Norway

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1. Introduction

This guide shall provide advice and guidance for the infection control-related conduct of services and other gatherings under the auspices of churches during the covid-19 pandemic.

On March 12th, Christian Council of Norway (CCN) recommended all the member churches to cancel all services until further notice. Church services and ecclesiastical acts are the core activities of the churches. They have a central role in many people's lives. Churches in Norway will open and conduct church services and ecclesiastical acts as the society successively reopens.

This should happen gradually and in controlled forms so that we contribute to joint efforts to prevent infection. This infection control guide will contribute to this.

The authorities have defined funerals as a socially critical task. For this reason, funerals with limited attendance have taken place throughout the corona period.

SARS-CoV-2 is the name of the virus that is causing the outbreak of COVID-19 disease. The virus can cause respiratory tract infection of varying severity. The virus transmits mainly via droplet and contact infection when viruses in the respiratory tract are transmitted from the respiratory tract of a sick person on to another person. Contagion can therefore occur either when coughing or sneezing at another person, or if you get airway secretions on objects touched by others. Some people may have Covid-19 without noticing symptoms. It is currently unclear how much of a role these individuals have in the spread of infection. WHO estimate the incubation time (from infection until symptoms appear) to be 5-6 days, but this can vary from 0 to 14 days. The virus does not tolerate soap and water, nor disinfection with alcohol or temperatures above 60 degrees.

The church represented by the board, is responsible for assessing whether they have met basic requirements for infection control in a satisfactory manner. This guide provides advice and guidance that will help churches and congregations in this work. The individual assembly must consider for itself how the measures should be adapted according to local conditions. In order to ensure the safeguarding of infection control measures, good coordination and cooperation between the various actors involved in the implementation of meetings and services, are of essential importance.

Information from Norwegian Directorate of Health

You will find information materials and posters about covid-19 on the website of Norwegian Directorate of Health:

<https://www.helsedirektoratet.no/brosjyrer/vaner-som-forebygger-smitte>

Print them and place them visibly at the entrance and other suitable places in the building where you gather.

You will find further information in English here: <https://www.fhi.no/en/op/novel-coronavirus-facts-advice/facts-and-knowledge-about-covid-19/facts-about-novel-coronavirus/>.

About this guide

Christian Council of Norway has prepared this infection control guide. It is general by form and you have to consider it in light of various church arrangements and terminology used in different churches. The guide will be updated in accordance with the changed advice of national health authorities. New versions will then replace previous editions. The guide is located on CCN WEBSITE: <https://norgeskristnerad.no/informasjon-om-corona/> and should be clearly marked with "last updated dd.mm.yyyy"

2. Liability and decision-making authority

In order to ensure a proper and gradual implementation of the reopening of ordinary church service in churches in Norway a good coordination is required between the management, priests/pastors and others who will have a role in the implementation of the service. The different churches use various concepts on responsible management. The board, the parish council, the elders councils are widely used. One single person manages some communities.

This supervisor consistently uses management as an expression of the responsible management. To simplify, the term church is also consistently used. It includes both the church building, the church house and the congregation using the building. Management is responsible for enforcing the operation, implementation of services and other activities in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The management is responsible for ensuring the proper operation of the church

with respect to infection control, and placing responsibility for various tasks in connection with the infection control advice.

Management must provide the necessary training and information for employees, volunteer staff and participants/users. Contagion prevention plans must be adapted to local conditions according to advice given in this guide.

The priest/pastor is responsible for the conduct of the service and ecclesiastical acts. This person shall ensure that the necessary instructions have been given to participants/relatives before, during and after ceremonies/ecclesiastical acts.

3. Infection prevention measures

3.1. Overall guidelines for ensuring good infection control

In all sections of society many measures has been taken to limit the spread of infection. It is important to use measures that are adapted to different situations. SARS-CoV-2 virus mainly transmit via droplet and contact infection. The virus is mostly spread by coughing and sneezing – and less by normal speech/talking. It has not been proven that the new coronavirus infects via food, drink or water.

The four pillars for slowing the spread of infection are:

- A. Sick persons shall not attend church events
- B. Good hygiene
- C. Good distance and minimum contact between persons
- D. Minimum common use and touching of fixtures and equipment

Despite well-implemented measures, cases of Covid-19 and other infections can occur. If the infection control measures in this guide are properly carried out, the spread of infection will be limited. The measures below are a description of what infection control measures must be in place to successfully reduce infection risk to a minimum.

3.1.1. Sick persons shall not attend church events

- Use the church website and the contact with relatives, participants etc. to inform clearly that those who may be corona-sick, have symptoms of respiratory infection or are in quarantine cannot attend church events.
- All employees and volunteers who have symptoms of respiratory infection should not go to work or participate in the preparation and implementation of services/meetings.
- Employees and volunteers have a particular responsibility to follow the authorities' advice on quarantine and isolation when developing their own symptoms or in case of close contact with people with proven infection.
- The management are responsible for informing volunteers and participants that they shall notify the management if they develop disease after 1-2 days.
- The municipal health service is responsible for monitoring cases of confirmed covid-19 (infection tracking), and shall notify the church if users or employees are confirmed covid-19. The municipal health service shall decide further measures and define quarantine for persons with close contacts to the sick person.

3.1.2. Good hygiene

- Ensure proper information at the entrance, etc. for participants and employees with advices to avoid infection. (Cf. posters mentioned above available from the website of website of Norwegian Directorate of Health.)
- Provide for easily accessible hand washing or hand disinfection facilities for employees, volunteers and participants.
- The hand hygiene regulations should be carried out as a minimum on arrival, between different tasks (for example, if you move or change equipment), after toilet visits, and before and after kitchen work and eating. Ensure a sufficient amount of paper towels at the hands washing facilities.
- Avoid handshaking, hugging and unnecessary physical contact.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing directly onto others. Try to cough/ sneeze into a paper tissue (carefully disposed of afterwards), or into the crook of your elbow if you do not have tissues available.

3.1.3. Maintain required distance and minimum contact between person

- The Government has decided that from seventh of May 2020 it is allowed with congregations of until 50 individuals.
- Employees, volunteers or contractors responsible for the implementation of events in a public place shall not be considered part of the event, if they can use their own entrance. These parties shall not take a seat in the assembly during the service/meeting. If there is only one entry and exit, they must arrive and leave the premises in advance or after other participants in the service.
- The precondition for such congregations are that they should be organised in such a way that the attendants could keep at least one meter distance to another person. This can be organised by information, organizing chairs and benches or other physical facilitation. This applies both in the assembly hall itself, at the entrance/exit and any collection in the open air.
- The minimum distance requirements do not apply to people from the same household.
- Attendance must be registered pursuant to the Covid-19 Regulations. Attendance overview should be deleted after 10 days.
- The size of the church room overrides the maximum number. That means if the size of the room makes it impossible to meet with the distance requirements, a lower number of participants should be allowed.
- Please observe that due to local conditions there can be special municipal regulations concerning quantity restrictions.

- The organizer should consider physical measures to contribute to sufficient distance between attendants: Refurnishing the premises, shutting down every other bench/chair row, marking with tape on the floor, etc.
- Avoid joint rigging. Refurnishing and equipment must be put forward in advance of the service.
- Articulation when performing singing by soloists or smaller groups may result in an increased risk of infection spreading. For this reason, any additional distance is recommended in such cases.
- Church coffee and other communal food and beverage services should not take place.
- Reduce the possibility of contact that may occur in case of congestion at exit, communion, music performance etc.
- Pay attention to the need for organizing by exit, communion, music performance etc. in order to comply with the distance requirements and avoid congestion.

3.1.4. Minimum common use and touching of fixtures and equipment

- Instruments, microphones, books etc. shall not be shared and not touched by anyone other than the person who will use them.
- Do not use hymnbooks. Use program sheets or display on screen/projector.
- Keyboard of any instrument or other equipment used by several people must be disinfected between every change of performer/user.

3.2. General cleaning

Clear and good general cleaning procedures are required. These routines ought to be published by posters in the church/office apply to all rooms used.

- Good general cleaning of the premises is necessary. Ordinary cleaning agents can be used.
- Door handles stair railings, washbasins and other objects or surfaces frequently touched should be cleaned frequently.
- Ethanol-based disinfectant can be used on clean surfaces, but please note: This is not sufficient in the case of visible dirty surfaces. Therefore, dirty surfaces must be cleaned before any use of disinfectants as well.
- Clean equipment used prior to the next use. This also applies to organ, piano, keyboards, pulpit, microphones, wires, speaker systems, altar tables and surfaces in other rooms used in connection with the service if more people use them.

- Performers on wind instruments in the church room must have their own routines for use and cleaning.
- If the church's toilets are to be accessible, there must also be routines for cleaning. Toilets in daily use should be cleaned daily.

4. Ecclesiastical acts

With the assumption that the described measures for infection control are followed, the local church can find solutions for services and other organized activity in churches and other parish premises in line with this guide. This also includes ecclesiastical acts such as holy communion, baptisms, wedding ceremonies, and funeral ceremonies.

4.1. Holy Communion

- Those who prepare and hand out wine and bread/wafers, or break the bread should maintain prescribed hand hygiene immediately before the ceremony begins.
- Communion is to be carried out in such a way that there is no direct contact between administrator, the elements and the communicant.
- This can be achieved with the use of separate cups. Where you use wafers, these can be placed in each cup, preferably before the communion meal begins.
- The communicant brings the separate cup with a wafer, even takes the wafer in the mouth and holds the cup (as usual) forward.
- Using broken bread, place the broken bread on a platter or tray with a cloth of paper. It is assumed that the number of pieces is sufficient according to the numbers of communicants and that distance between the pieces of bread is sufficient that one piece can be picked without being touched by other communicants.
- The communicant receives separate cup and bread, takes the bread in his mouth and holds the cup.
- Please note: Keep at least one-metre distance between the administrator, the communicant, and other communicants.
- The church must have satisfactory procedures to ensure disinfectant cleaning of the equipment used, or using disposable cups.
- Those who prepare and administrate the communion should maintain good hand hygiene prior to the ceremony and afterward.

4.2. Baptism

There are both different baptismal practices and different baptismal rituals in Christian churches in Norway.

4.2.1. Baptism of infants can be performed in the ordinary manner

- The baptismal companion standing at the baptismal font with the priest should consist of few persons.
- The baptismal action is carried out in the usual way without the use of gloves: marking the sign of the cross on the forehead, pouring water over the

child's head, wiping the child's head and laying on the hand. This requires thorough hand washing in advance.

- Papirserviett brukes til å tørke dåpsbarnets hode. Tøyserviett kan benyttes dersom dåpsfølget har dette med og håndterer denne. Andre løsninger som ivaretar smittevernhensynet kan vurderes.

Use paper napkin to wipe the baptismal baby's head. A napkin of clothes can be used if the baptismal companion brings this with and handles it. Other solutions that maintain of infection control measures may be considered.

- IF possible, the child should be held by the same person through the service/baptismal act and possibly lift the child before the congregation after the baptismal act.

4.2.2. Baptism of adults by Baptist form

- According to statement from Norwegian Directorate of Health dated 12th of May 2020, baptism of adults following baptistic form should not be conducted, until further notice.

4.3. Marriage ceremonies

Churches should help to find good solutions for marriage ceremonies. General regulations on infection control must be maintained. Ceremonies outdoors, where the bridal couple is responsible for facilitating, may be an alternative to the church premises.

- Only the bridal couples and the witnesses should stand at the altar together with the priest/pastor.
- The marriage ceremony and intercession with the laying of hands can be carried out in the ordinary manner. The precondition is the maintaining of good hand hygiene in advance and after.

4.4. Funeral ceremonies

- Funeral ceremony takes place within normal deadlines after death.
- Det kan være både generelle og lokale antallsbegrensningene for gravferd. Dette kan gi grunnlag for å tilby en minneseremoni i kirken/menigheten i forbindelse med et utsatt minnesamvær, urnenedsettelse el.lign.

There may be both general and local restrictions on allowed number of attendants for burials. A memorial ceremony in the church with limited attendants and a postponed more open commemoration could be considered.

- If possible, we recommend streaming the ceremony according to the guidelines that apply to this.
- Forrettende prest/pastor bør ha løpende kontakt med begravelsesbyrå slik at de er kjent med lokal fleksibilitet i forbindelse med seremonier.

The conducting priest/pastor should have ongoing contact with the undertaker so that they are familiar with local flexibility in connection with ceremonies

- I forkant av begravelsen anbefales det å redusere antall berøringspunkter, ved å ha åpen inngangsdør, benytte trykte salmeark, ikke benytte puter i benkene og lignende.

Prior to the funeral, reduce the number of touch points, by having an open front door, using printed hymn sheets, not using pillows in the benches and the like.

- It is a precondition that those present do not have an acute respiratory infection, and that general regulations on infection control are maintained. This also applies to relatives or others who carry the coffin.
- Information about general infection control routines should be made visible by posters at entrance of chapel/church rooms.

5. Checklist for infection control in church activities

Measures	Responsible	Conducted Date	Note
Management's overall responsibilities			
Training employees and others by making them aware of the content of this guide			
Information for members and church visitors upon posting at the entrance to the church, on websites and social media about routines during church visits.			
Making a plan for hygiene measures and cleaning			
Establish dialogue with any employees, users or others who are at risk and who may need accommodations			
Sick people should participate in the services			
Information to employees, volunteer staff and users that sick people should stay at home, even in case of mild symptoms.			
Good hygiene			
Ensure that there is sufficient soap and paper towels available at all sink stations and toilets.			
Henge opp plakater om håndvaskrutiner og hostehygiene			
Wash hands frequently and thoroughly (use hand disinfection if necessary)			
Plan for cleaning including frequency and method			
Routines for reinforced cleaning in exposed areas that are affected frequently (door handles, stair rails, tabletops, etc.)			

Place alcohol-based disinfection where no hand washing facilities is available and on those places recommended in this guide.			
Reduced contact between persons			
Keep at least a minimum of one meter distance between people.			
Establish routines and assign responsibility for the organising of seating, clearly marking which chairs, benches to be used.			
Plan to organize queue and ensure sufficient distance between participants at communion and more.			
Plan to ensure that there is recommended distance between people in common areas such as hallway, changing rooms, waiting rooms, toilets and the entrance of the premises.			
Procedures for marking on floors to ensure distance in areas where congestion may occur, if necessary.			