

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES
CORONAVIRUS – COVID19
GUIDANCE ON MUSIC AND THE PLAYING OF CHURCH ORGANS

From the 9th November, Welsh Government has confirmed that in addition to it being permissible for church organs to be played in churches as part of private prayer, marriages, funerals or worship activities, it is now possible to undertake organised choral singing. This note seeks to provide guidance on how this might be undertaken in a Covid-19 Safe manner.

Music and singing at services, as well as all other aspects of church opening, needs to be based on a written risk assessment which considers the likely routes of transmission of coronavirus and sets out reasonable mitigation measures. The key measures will be based on two-metre physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning.

Overall Position

Singing:

Congregational singing should not take place given the increased risk of infection from these activities. Recorded music may be appropriate as an alternative to hymn singing. Music should not be at a volume that makes normal conversations difficult.

It is permissible for an individual to sing at a service where it is an essential part of the service. Such a singer should sing behind a plexi-glass screen to protect guests. Physical distancing should be observed at all times. It is possible for more than one individual to sing over the course of the service, but this should not be more than one at a particular time and there should be separate arrangements to protect from transmission e.g separate plexi-screens or cleaning of screens between each use.

Singing outdoors is permissible as an organised activity for up to 30 people observing physical distancing. Raised voices including singing appear to be a risk factor for the spread of Covid-19. It is recommended that such organised singing activity is conducted after a careful risk assessment and that loud singing is avoided.

Musical Instruments:

Welsh Government guidance also states that you should not play musical instruments indoors that are physically blown into e.g wind or brass instruments. However, a pipe organ can be played as part of a worship, funeral or wedding service. The decision to use an organ (which requires a limited quantity of air to pass through the mechanism) should be based on a risk assessment and adherence with social distancing, hand hygiene and cleaning guidance. The use of alternative instruments such as an electronic keyboard or recorded music should still be considered.

A pipe organ may also be played for practice or maintenance purposes when the building is closed to the public.

NB Whilst the organ can be played, the congregation cannot sing with it. The organ can accompany an individual singer as described above.

Considerations for the assessment of risk relating to organs is attached at Appendix I.

9th November 2020

Appendix I: Risk Assessment considerations for Organs

Physical Distancing	<p>A clear 2-metre distancing should be maintained between the organist and any other person. This might be demarked by floor tape and signage where the organ is accessible to service attendees. Signage on organ loft entrances should be considered. The organist should play alone i.e no page-turner or registrant should be present (unless a member of the organist's household)</p> <p>It is advised that 2 metre distancing should be maintained between people and the organ itself. Whilst air movement from organs is minimal, this is safe precaution especially for certain instruments like pedal-powered harmoniums.</p> <p>Consider access routes to and from the organ or organ loft.</p>
Hygiene	<p>As for all other attendees at the church, sanitiser should be available at entry and exit points. It is advised to provide sanitiser specifically for the organist near to the organ or loft.</p> <p>Face coverings should be worn by all person aged over 11 gathering inside the building.</p> <p>It is sensible to ensure a break of 72 hours between different organists using the instrument if rigorous surface cleaning cannot be achieved between users. Prevent anyone else from touching the instrument during such a break too.</p> <p>Music scores, books and sheets no scores to be left in situ following occupancy or shared unless a 72-hour break between use can be guaranteed. Hand sanitize before and after use.</p>
Cleaning	<p>The touched surfaces of the organ should be cleaned before and after use. Cleaning wipes can be used for this and bagged and disposed of carefully after use.</p> <p>Keyboards and stops are obvious points of contact but also consider handles, doors, handrails, organ seat and other areas around the organ which will be touched.</p> <p>Cleaning of the organ surfaces should sit alongside the Covid-19 cleaning regime of the wider church.</p>