

GUIDELINES FOR FUNERAL SERVICES AT CARRICKFERGUS BAPTIST CHURCH DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC.

V3 General. (New N I Executive Guidance 01 07 2021)

Funeral services can be conducted in Carrickfergus Baptist Church, with certain COVID19 restrictions in place and being strictly adhered to.

This guidance has been developed to ensure that:

- the bereaved, are treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect
- mourners and workers involved in the management of the funeral are protected from the avoidable risk of infection.
- The number that can attend the service safely indoors, while observing social distancing of at least one metre is determined by church capacity. Currently up to 100 mourners can be accommodated safely.

Live streaming of the service *may* be offered but is subject to operators being available.

Please allow more time than usual to be in attendance at church so that physical distancing and health guidelines can be safely and strictly adhered to at all reasonable times.

A funeral service in the main church auditorium will preferably take place on a Wednesday or Thursday, as that room must be left fallow for 72hrs to de-contaminate after use on a Sunday, in line with government COVID guidelines. I

In exceptional circumstances, any day except Sunday will be made available, as church can now be sanitised after use.

It is preferable that mourners at the funeral attend by invitation only administered by the family organising the funeral service and limited to 100 people maximum. It will also help with seating arrangements if you could indicate those who can sit together from the same household or support bubbles. If numbers are well below 100 mourners, there is no need for a seating plan.

Government regulations on contact tracing are not required as Carrickfergus Baptist Church operate a COVID safe environment.

Face coverings are mandatory entering, moving about and leaving the building and wearing of a face covering is very strongly advised in all other situations.

Any mourner displaying symptoms of coronavirus or is in the process of self-isolation, should **not attend** a funeral as they pose a risk to others.

Any mourner who has been advised to shield or are over 70 with an underlying health condition, is advised **not to attend** the indoor service as they pose a risk to themselves.

Car Parking is available in the church car park. Mourners are respectfully requested to adhere to social distancing while entering and leaving the church building /s.

Family Reception Area/ Foyer 2 church stewards are required to supervise.

Temperature will be taken and sanitiser applied to hands before entry to church building.

All doors will be open so contact with surfaces is eliminated.

Unfortunately, there can be no contact between mourners so the usual protocol of greeting mourners cannot take place inside the building.

Family Members should take their places at the front of the church and need to be in attendance in good time as church is filled from front to back. A list of seats required for family members may be sent to the pastor or church representative so seats can be reserved. Family groups / units / bubbles that can all sit together, without physical distancing, should be indicated in advance for sequencing if possible.

Books of condolences cannot be availed of due to contact with pens. One idea is to have mourners e mail their thoughts to a family member who can cut and paste to make a scrap book of sorts.

Paper Order of Service can be printed and left in the foyer by the undertaker for mourners to collect on way in.

Entering the building - Main Auditorium

Face coverings must be worn entering and leaving the church.

Main entrance through foyer is entry point: rear fire exit doors at pulpit is exit point only.

One-way system to be observed at all times by mourners.

In emergencies use nearest exit.

Sanitiser is provided and must be applied by all mourners on entering the building

One Deacon per isle will usher mourners to seats. **Isles are 1M plus wide.**

Once an individual/ couple/family group or bubble has been seated, **2 seats** must be left vacant, (1M rule), before seating next attendee.

During the service

The coffin and flowers should be in place at the front of the church prior to service commencing. The front middle row of chairs will be removed to accommodate this.

As a mark of respect, the coffin can be wheeled down one of the isles and out the front main entrance doors to the car park followed by close family members. This is because there should be few people in the foyer and this will enable 1M+ physical distancing.

Songs and hymns can be played by a pianist or from a recorded source and displayed on large screens in the church but unfortunately due to current Government COVID guidelines, singing can take place congregationally whilst a face covering is worn to avoid spreading particles in the air.

1 or 2 separate singers can take part from behind plastic screens if desired.

Separate microphones will be provided for up to 2 or 3 people to speak, if desired, during the service, in addition to the Pastor's personal microphone- all at a minimum 1M+ apart.

Leaving the church at the end of the service.

All remaining mourners will leave by the one-way system out the exit doors nearest the pulpit. There is a hand sanitising point at this location that all mourners may use before leaving the church, whereupon they can gather at the recommended physical distancing adjacent to the front entrance near their loved one's remains.

Please maintain a strict 1M+ physical distance in the church car park whilst conversing and consoling.

From this point onward, it is then the undertaker's responsibility to adhere to the current Government physical distancing guidelines on handling the coffin and the subsequent funeral procession.

Unfortunately, the church is not able to provide the usual hospitality of food or tea after the committal service at the graveside inside the church building, due to current government restrictions.

The room in which the funeral service has been conducted must be left for at least 72hrs to self de-contaminate and the designated signs annotated and placed over all entrance doors to this effect.

The deacons on duty / volunteers will wipe frequently touched points in hall before leaving and sanitising their hands in the Sports Hall exit area.

We apologise for the strict bureaucratic language used in the guidance letter at this your sad time of loss and mourning, but the COVID-19 pandemic means that we as a church and society must do things differently as we adapt to the changing and challenging circumstances to ensure your safety at all times.

But we are reminded every time we walk into our church building of the verse in Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 8, that although life is uncertain and fearful at times, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever! We assure you of our continued love, compassion and prayer for you and your family at this time of great sadness and loss.