

College of Bishops Pastoral Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings in SEC Churches: Phase 3 of the Scottish Government Lockdown Easing

The Bishop's Advisory Group for the Re-opening of Buildings has taken the [Scottish Government Guidance](#) and produced the following in our [Phase 3 guidance](#):

“Face coverings should be worn if the 2m physical distancing is likely to be compromised. Churches should therefore consider encouraging those attending to bring their own face coverings and additionally should make face coverings available on arrival at the church building for any person who does not have their own. Hands should be washed or sanitised before putting on and after taking off a face covering. Any such covering supplied should be taken home or disposed of after use.”

In all churches face coverings will be worn e.g. by welcomers and the president at the distribution of communion as these are contexts where interactions within 2m are essential or will occur. The priest and others involved in the setting up of the service may well wear face coverings while preparing for worship.

The decision about whether face coverings should be worn more widely in church is a local decision.

Issues to consider in making this decision:

- Wearing face coverings in church gives a positive public safety message;
- Removal and replacement of face coverings during the service is necessary in services of Holy Communion;
- The hygiene of removing/replacing face coverings and sanitising hands each time as stated in the Phase 3 Guidance is complex and may require additional guidance and training for the congregation (a video link ### has been produced to help);
- In large, spacious, well ventilated church buildings where physical distancing is relatively easy to achieve and there are minimal 'pinch points' for access, the congregation may have no need to wear face coverings at any time;
- In smaller churches and where access is be more constrained, it might feel safer for face coverings to be worn as the congregation arrive and depart or possibly even whilst sat in their physically distanced places during the service.

Please consider all these factors in making the decision. If the decision is to recommend the wearing of face coverings in church, communicate this recommendation in clear and simple terms to the congregation and any visitors.