

To those who lead our local churches

Wedding and Funeral Services

Questions are likely to arise in many congregations about whether we can host and conduct wedding and funeral services in the current emergency.



Here are some thoughts about what we might do at the moment. It is possible that this guidance could change in the days and weeks ahead.

Wedding couples could be asked to consider holding the service with the legal minimum number of people present (five, I believe). Then they could defer their main celebration to another time, when it could of course include a much fuller church service.

Funerals often attract a lot of elderly mourners. So perhaps we should think instead about a simple committal ceremony at cemetery or crematorium with an intentionally very small number of people present.

Tributes can then be paid in other ways for larger numbers of people to read – either online, or in a church newsletter – or given in a memorial service later in the year.

All of that may feel very unsatisfactory. But there is not a satisfactory way to deal with these issues. We don't want anyone's life to end because they attended a funeral.

Further, ministers or other worship leaders who are vulnerable – either because they are over 70, or because of health issues – should surely stand down from public duty. Much can be done from home, by phone and online. As a Church, we ask those who care for us to care for themselves too, especially when life could be at risk.

Much of the above is said very well on the website of the West Midlands Synod:

<https://www.urcwestmidlands.org.uk/covid19.html#funerals>

With thanks for all you are doing and bearing in these days,

John Proctor
General Secretary