



June 10th 2020

Guidelines for reopening the Danish church and other religious communities

COVID-19 has serious consequences for the everyday lives of citizens. Many and far-reaching initiatives have been taken to mitigate the consequences of the outbreak and the Danish Church and other faiths have as such kept their premises closed to the public.

So far, the many initiatives to limit the spread of infection have had the desired effect. It is therefore possible to extend the gradual reopening of Denmark with a responsible reopening of the Danish Church and other faith communities.

The prerequisite for the reopening of Denmark is that people continue to comply with the recommendations of the health authorities in order to avoid the spread of infection. Here, the Danish Church and other faith communities have a great responsibility to ensure that the spread of infection is minimized and that the need for distancing between people as well as a continued focus on hygiene is respected. The Danish Church and other religious communities should pay particular attention to avoiding the spread of infection among people at increased risk, who are present at church services and church activities, etc.

From 18th May 2020, the Danish Church and other faith communities can re-open churches, synagogues, mosques, as well as parishes, congregations and other premises for the public. This means the assembly ban no longer applies to the premises and buildings of the Danish church and other faith communities. At funerals and burials, the assembly ban does not apply outdoors either.

[The assembly ban also does not apply to outdoor events, events, activities, and the like, where as many participants are seated as possible, and which are organized by the Danish church and other faiths according to these guidelines. However, there must be a maximum of 500 participants, in accordance with the Executive Order banning large assemblies during covid-19.](#)

This allows for:

- Prayer, devotion, scripture and personal reflection.
- Religious services, mass, Friday prayers, etc.
- Baptism, confirmation, bar and bat mitzvah, marriage ceremonies, funerals, burials and similar religious acts.
- Other congregation activities in churches, synagogues, mosques, parishes and other premises.
- [Outdoor religious ceremonies and congregation activities if participants are seated as much as possible.](#)

Outdoor activities, [where participants are not sitting down](#) must continue to comply with the assembly ban. At funerals and burials [the assembly ban no longer applies, whether participants are sitting or standing.](#)

Indoor activities [of the Danish church and other faith communities must still](#) comply with the requirements for premises to which the public has access, cf. Executive Order on Prohibition of Major Assemblies and Against Access to and Restrictions on Premises and Premises in Handling Covid-19, Including:

1. A maximum access of 1 visitor per 4 sqm of floor space to which there is public access. [In premises and buildings where visitors are seated or kneeling, it is now 1 visitor or participant per 2 sqm of floor space.](#) The floor area is calculated from wall to wall regardless of furniture etc. The preacher as well as personnel (and volunteers) who participate in a service, in a religious act, or in a church activity are not included in this restriction.
2. The premises shall, as much as possible, be arranged in such a way as to minimize the risk of contamination, including allowing participants, visitors, staff and volunteers to keep a distance from one another.

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3. Informational material should be set up in or near the premises warning people who have symptoms of COVID-19 to isolate themselves at home, and about good hygiene and appropriate behavior in the public space. The information material is published by the National Board of Health.
4. It must be ensured that all employees, volunteers and visitors adhere to the National Board of Health's recommendations on good hygiene and appropriate behavior. The recommendations are published by the National Board of Health and can be found in different languages at <https://coronadenmark.dk/>.
5. Where possible, water and liquid soap or alcohol-based (70-85%) hand disinfectant should be available to participants and visitors.
6. Employees and other persons associated with the premises must wear gloves when handling unpackaged food if the food is touched with their hands.

In addition, the health authorities' general recommendations on the prevention of the spread of infection should be observed:

- Ensure that there is at least 1 meter between persons. However, in situations where there may be an increased risk of spread or where a precautionary principle warrants a special consideration, there should be at least 2 meters distance between persons. This applies, for example, at a church service where 2 meters distance between churchgoers should be ensured if singing, while 1 meter is sufficient if song is omitted. The same applies for people at increased risk.
- Behavioral regulation and nudging as well as practical measures in the public space should be considered to support distance-keeping, e.g. with room dividers and spacing tape.
- The rooms are arranged so that it is possible to keep the recommended distance, eg. by reducing the number of chairs or available church benches. Similarly, one should be aware of the distance requirements upon arrival and departure. For larger number of guests, etc. persons responsible for ensuring compliance with distance requirements should be appointed.
- The distance is assessed 'from nose to nose tip', so that e.g. when seated, the seat must be measured from the center of the chair seats, not from armrests to armrests. In many situations, it may be easier to secure spacing requirements when seated. When adjusting standing, kneeling and walking persons, distance can be marked on the wall, table, floor or the like. People who are in daily contact, such as members of the same household can sit at a normal distance from one another.
- Hand hygiene is recommended eg. upon arrival to and from the premises, between various tasks and activities, before eating etc. There should be no shared towels, soaps, etc. on toilets and the like.
- For buffet dining, communal dining, etc. special attention should be paid to contact surfaces, including whether personal tools, disposable utensils or serving bowls can be used for self-service.

The guidelines for a responsible reopening of the Danish church and other faith communities are dynamic and constantly adapted to the situation.

Holy communion and other religious eating and drinking rituals

To the extent that consuming food and drink as part of the worship service, Mass, Friday prayer or religious act is considered necessary, careful consideration should be given to how it can be carried out in a healthy manner. Do not use common drinking cups, and wear gloves if non-packaged food is dispensed by hand. One can for example consider,

- whether, according to the traditions of the religious community, you want to encourage the participants to bring their own food and drink as well and cups, cutlery etc.
- whether single-use containers can be used
- how staff and volunteers involved in giving the sacrament or other food and drink can minimize the risk of infection

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Use of objects during worship, Mass, Friday prayer, etc.

In the national church and other faiths, physical tangible objects are used in various situations during worship, Mass, Friday prayer and by religious acts. In this context, it should be considered:

- whether participants can avoid sharing the same physical objects - e.g. hymnbooks, prayer books, prayer shawls, etc. - but instead bring their own copies or by not use the objects at all during this time
- whether items belonging to the faith community can be replaced by disposable items (eg copy sheets instead of hymn books), or it can be ensured that the items are cleaned properly. If proper cleaning is not possible, more than 48 hours must elapse between each use of the items
- how to ensure that distance requirements are still complied with if the participants have to change location in the room, eg. in connection with sacrament, reading, scripture and the like.

Music and singing

For activities with heavy exhalation where droplets are spread, e.g. song, wind instruments, special guidelines apply because of the risks. At ritual ceremonies such as worship, Mass, Friday prayer and religious acts, 2 meters distance between participants should be ensured if singing, while 1 meter is sufficient if song is omitted. The same is true for e.g. choirs and collective singing in connection with other congregational activities. It should be considered whether singing can be completely omitted as long as there is a risk of coronavirus infection spread.

In addition, it is recommended that:

- musicians do not share instruments and that the instruments, if present in the building / room, are cleaned before and after use to the extent possible
- special attention is paid to whether and how wind instruments can be used
- physical barriers are set up eg. plexiglass if the necessary distance between singers and between singers and musicians cannot be ensured.

People at increased risk

Persons who are infected or have symptoms will still not have the opportunity to enter the Danish church and other faith congregation premises after a reopening.

Visitors at increased risk (see the National Board of Health's guidance) should consider whether they are physically participating in activities in the Danish church or other faiths or whether they should seek to participate in other ways. It is recommended that the Danish church and other faiths maintain offers online or any of the alternative initiatives taken, to service these individuals.

For employees at increased risk, e.g. pregnant or elderly, it is recommended that the management, in dialogue with the individual employee, make a concrete and individual assessment based on the guidelines of the National Board of Health in this area.

Outdoor activities

If ritual ceremonies such as worship, Mass, Friday prayer, religious acts, etc. or other congregational activities are held outdoors, [the assembly ban does not apply if the participants as much as possible remain seated or kneeling. If the participants stand and walk around](#) the applicable regulations on the permitted size of congregations must be observed at all times.

Meetings in other faith communities

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Board meetings and general meetings of other faith communities can be held if the floor space requirements, interior design, information and good hygiene requirements are met. Health authorities' recommendations regarding 1 meter distance between participants (2 meters distance if singing) and infection-minimizing measures as well as other recommendations from the health authorities should also be observed.

If the meeting can be held as a video or telephone conference, it can be a good alternative to the physical meeting, both for people at increased risk and for others.

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