



Kirkeministeriet



STYRELSEN FOR  
PATIENTSIKKERHED

Published 17 May 2020

Updated 9 June 2020

## **Guidelines for a responsible reopening of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities**

COVID-19 has serious consequences for the life and daily activities of Danes. Many and extensive initiatives have been taken to mitigate the consequences of the outbreak, including closing the worship spaces of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities to the public.

The many initiatives to limit the spread of infection have had their intended effect so far. It is, therefore, possible to expand the gradual reopening of Denmark with a responsible reopening of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities.

It is a prerequisite of the reopening of Denmark that Danes continue to comply with the Danish Health Authority's recommendations to avoid spreading the infection. Here, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities have a great responsibility to ensure that the spread of infection is minimised, and that the need for keeping physical distance and a continued sharpened focus on proper hygiene is respected. In this connection, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities should be especially attentive to avoid spreading infection among people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 who are attending services and congregational activities, etc.

Starting 18 May 2020, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities can open churches, synagogues, mosques and similar as well as parish halls, congregational houses and other premises to the public. At the same time, the ban on gatherings does not apply to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities on premises at their disposal. For funerals and burials, the ban on gatherings does not apply outside. Nor does the ban on gatherings apply to outdoor events, activities and similar carried out by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities if the participants are mainly seated. The maximum number of participants for these events are 500 people, cf. [Executive Order on Ban on Large Gatherings in connection with COVID-19](#).

This provides an opportunity for:

- Prayer, devotion (abbreviated services, masses, Friday prayers, etc.), confession and personal reflection.
- Services, masses, Friday prayers, etc.
- Baptism, confirmation/bar and bat mitzvahs, marriage, burial, funeral and similar religious events.
- Other congregational activities in churches, synagogues, mosques, parish halls, congregational houses and other premises.
- Outdoor religious ceremonies and congregational activities if the participants are mainly seated.

The ban on gatherings still applies to outdoor activities, where participants are not mainly seated. For funerals and burials, the ban on gatherings does not apply neither when the participants are standing nor seated.

Activities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities on premises at their disposal must maintain the applicable requirements for premises that are accessible to the public, cf. [Executive Order on Ban on Large Gatherings and Access to and Restrictions for Premises and Localities in connection with COVID-19](#), including:

1. Access is permitted for a maximum of 1 visitor or participant per 4 square metres of floor space where there is public access. For premises where visitors or participants are mainly seated or kneeling, access is permitted for 1 visitor or participant per 2 square metres floor space. If the floor space is

less than 4 square metres, access is permitted for 1 visitor or participant. The floor space is measured wall to wall, regardless of the furnishing, etc. The pastor and any staff (and volunteers) who serve during a service, mass, Friday prayers, etc. during a religious event or a congregational activity, are not included in the measurement.

2. The premises must be equipped, in so far as possible, to minimise the spread of infection, hereunder by making it possible for participants, visitors, employees and volunteers to keep physical distance from each other.
3. On or near the premises, informational material must be set up informing that persons who have symptoms of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) should self-isolate in their home, and about proper hygiene and appropriate behaviour in the public space. The informational material is published by the Danish Health Authority.
4. It must be ensured that all employees, volunteers and visitors comply with the Danish National Health Authority's recommendations about proper hygiene and appropriate behaviour. The recommendations are published by the Danish Health Authority.
5. So far as possible, water and liquid soap or alcohol based (70-85%) hand disinfectants must be available for participants and visitors.
6. Employees and other people who are associated with the premises must use gloves when distributing non-packaged food products if food products are touched with the hands.

In addition, the health care authority's general recommendations to prevent the spread of infection should be observed:

- At least a 1-metre distance should be ensured between people. In situations where there can be an increased risk of droplet spread, or where the cautionary principle indicates special concern, there should be at least a 2-metre distance between people. This applies, for example, during services, where a 2-metre distance should be maintained between church attendees, if there is singing, while a 1-metre is sufficient if singing is excluded. The recommendation on 2-metre distance also applies when meeting people who are at higher risk.
- Behavioural furnishings as well as measures (nudging) and practical arrangements in the public space should be considered to support keeping physical distance, for example by room divisions and distance markings.
- The premises are equipped so that it is possible to keep the recommended distance, for example by reducing the number of chairs or available church benches. At the same time, people should be attentive to the requirements for keeping physical distance when arriving and leaving. If there are larger numbers of simultaneous guests, etc., persons should be designated with a responsibility to ensure compliance with keeping physical distance.
- The distance is considered "from tip of the nose to tip of the nose", so that with seated furnishings, it should be measured from the middle of the chair seats, not from armrest to armrest. In many situations, it may be easier to ensure physical distance with seated furnishing. When managing standing, kneeling and walking persons, distance can be marked on a wall, table, floor or similar. People, who are in close contact daily, such as members of the same household, can sit at normal distance from each other.
- Proper hand hygiene is recommended, for example upon arrival to and from the premises, between different tasks and activities, before eating, etc. There should not be common hand towels, soap pieces, etc. in toilets and similar.
- When there are buffets, common meals etc. there should be a special focus on contact surfaces, including the expedience of using personal utensils, disposable utensils or portion spoons with self-service.

The health care authority's general recommendations to prevent the spread of infection can be found [here](#).

The Danish Working Environment Authority provides further guidance for workplaces. The Danish Working Environment Authority's informational material can be found [here](#).

At [www.coronasmitte.dk](http://www.coronasmitte.dk) Danish authorities have collected information on the coronavirus infection/COVID-19.

In addition, the below reference should be followed in order to prevent the spread of infection and, at the same time, create safety for participants, visitors, employees and volunteers.

The guidelines for a responsible reopening of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities are dynamic and adapted to the ongoing situation.

It is a local responsibility to ensure that the reopening in practice occurs according to the guidelines, following the Danish National Health Authority's requirements and recommendations. Employers are encouraged to involve the employees in the planning of concrete measures. The employers, as a part of the cooperation about safety and health at the workplace, must meaningfully involve employees in the planning of concrete measures. Where there is a work environment organisation at the institution, they must be involved.

It is important that there is sufficient staffing in place in the form of employees or volunteers so that, in a safe way, activities can be conducted and guidance as well as help with complying with the health care guidelines can be provided to those assembled. It is also important that there is sufficient time and staffing (employees or volunteers) to ventilate and clean the premises between the planned activities. Ordinary cleaning, in most cases, is sufficient but it can be supplemented with disinfection based on the cautionary principle. The frequency of cleaning should be adapted to the activity, but frequent and repeated cleaning of contact surfaces, such as door handles, railings etc. are especially important and particularly on premises and situations with many visitors and/or many touches. In addition, there should be special attention paid to the cleaning of toilet and washing facilities.

### *Communion and other religious rituals with eating and drinking*

To the extent that receiving food and drink as a part of the service, mass, Friday prayer or the religious event is considered necessary, people should carefully consider how this can be done responsibly from a health care perspective. Common cups must not be used and, similarly, gloves should be used if non-packaged food is distributed that is touched by the hands. For example, people can consider

- whether, according to the religious community's traditions, participants can be encouraged to bring food and drink and any glass, utensils, etc. It is recommended that notices be posted on social media, for example, and for signs to announce this before the ceremony;
- whether disposable utensils can be used;
- how employees and volunteers who assist with the distribution of the communion or other forms of food and drink, can minimise the risk of spreading infection;
- whether food and drink that is distributed to the participants, according to the character of the ritual should be packed in piecewise.

### *Use of objects during services, masses, Friday prayers, etc.*

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities, physical objects are used in different situations during the service, mass, Friday prayers and religious events. Sometimes, participants also change places on the premises, for example while readings or other activities take place. Consider, in this connection:

- whether participants can avoid sharing the same physical objects - for example psalm books, prayer rugs, vessels for holy water, prayer books, prayer shawls, etc. - but instead bring their own objects, or whether for the period with a risk of spreading infection, these objects are not used;
- whether objects, that belong to the religious community can be replaced by disposable objects (for example paper photocopies instead of psalm books), or it can be ensured that the objects are carefully cleaned. If responsible and proper cleaning is not possible, there should be more than 48 hours between each time the objects are used;
- how it can be assured that physical distance can be kept continually if the participants change placement on the premises during the service, for example in connection with communion, readings, confession, marriage, etc. This may be mentioned at the start of the ceremony.

### *Music and singing*

If there are activities with strong exhalation, where droplets are spread farther away from people than with normal speech, for example singing, wind instruments, etc., special guidelines apply because of the risk of spreading aerosols. For ritual ceremonies such as services, masses, Friday prayers and religious events, etc. a 2-metre distance should be maintained between participants if there is singing, while 1-metre is sufficient if singing is omitted. The same applies to choral singing or congregational singing in connection with other congregational activities. It should be considered whether singing at congregational activities can be

completely omitted, as long as there is a risk of spreading infection with coronavirus.

Furthermore, it is recommended that:

- Musicians do not share instruments, and that the instruments, if they are in the building or on the premises, are cleaned before and after use to the extent it is possible;
- People are especially attentive to whether and how wind instruments can be used;
- Physical barriers are set up, for example Plexiglas panels and other screening, if a necessary distance between the singers cannot be maintained and between singers and instrumentalists.

### *People at higher risk*

After the reopening, people who are infected or have symptoms still do not have the possibility to go to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities.

Visitors who are at higher risk (see the Danish National Health Authority's guidelines [here](#)) should consider, in compliance with the recommendations from the health care authorities, whether to participate physically in activities in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark or other religious communities, or whether they should seek to participate in another way. It is recommended that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities maintain alternative activities, for example online or other initiatives implemented for these people.

For employees who are at higher risk, for example pregnant women or elderly people, it is recommended that the leadership, in dialogue with the individual employee, create a concrete and individual evaluation based on the Danish Health Authority's guidelines for the area.

### *Outdoor activities*

If ritual ceremonies, such as services, masses, Friday prayers, religious events etc. or other congregational activities are held outdoors, the ban on gathering does not apply if the participants are mainly seated or kneeling. If the participants are mainly standing or walking around, the current applicable rules about the permitted size of assemblies must be maintained. See also below about funerals and burials.

The general recommendations from the health care authority about proper hygiene, keeping physical distance and appropriate behaviour in general should be observed. The same applies to the abovementioned recommendations where it is relevant.

### *Funerals and Burials*

Burial and funeral services, including graveside services at cemeteries in connection with funerals, are not subjected to the ban on gatherings. This applies both indoors and outdoors.

At a funeral or a burial that mainly takes place seated in the church or on a religious community's premises, the requirement that access is permitted for a maximum of 1 visitor per 2 square metres of floor space on the premises must be maintained. In addition, the requirements for furnishings, information and the possibility of proper hygiene which applies to premises where the public has access, must be maintained, cf. hereinabove.

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and some other religious communities, a part of the funeral or burial takes place at the cemetery when the coffin, after the ceremony in the church or chapel, is either taken away in a hearse or when the coffin is lowered into the burial site followed by the scattering of earth. Here, the people who have participated in the church can naturally participate, but there will also be a possibility for other people to join the procession as part of the burial at the cemetery. In this connection, it should be noted that the limitation on the number of participants based on space requirement does not apply outdoors.

The general recommendations from the health care authorities about proper hygiene, keeping physical distance and responsible behaviour in general should be observed. This also applies outdoors.

### *Congregational activities other than ritual ceremonies*

It should be considered whether congregational activities on the premises of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark or other religious communities can be conducted in smaller groups, , regardless of whether the space requirements allow more participants.

It should also be considered whether singing at congregational activities can be omitted or minimised as long as there is a risk of spreading infection with coronavirus. When singing, a 2-metre distance between the participants must be maintained.

### *Meetings of the congregational council for the church, etc.*

In general, meetings of the congregational council, planning and budget committees and budget consultations are held as physical meetings with public access. The same applies to congregational meetings and orientation meetings. The public access to these meetings must take place in compliance with the requirements for premises for floor area, furnishings, information and possibilities of maintaining proper hygiene. The health care authority's recommendations of about a 1-metre distance between participants (2-metre distance, when singing) and the infection reduction measures as well as other recommendations from the health care authorities must also be observed.

The chairman, in the organisation of the meetings must be attentive to ensuring that the meeting room has a size and furnishings so that the applicable requirements are maintained for premises where the public has access, cf. hereinabove. The chairman, in addition, must ensure that the premises will be cleaned before and after the meeting. The chairman should also be attentive to whether there are members of the council or the committee who is at higher risk which should, therefore, not participate in a physical meeting. If this is the case, it should be ensured that these members have the possibility to participate in the council or committee's meeting by video or telephone.

Executive Order on the Possibility of Temporary Suspension of Rules on meetings of the Congregational Council, Planning and Budget Committees, etc. and meetings in connection with selection for Congregational Council in connection with Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) contains more detailed rules about the organisation of meetings in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark's congregational council, etc. The order applies up to 30 June 2020.

### *Meetings in other religious communities*

The governing meetings and general assemblies in other religious communities can be held, if they take place in compliance with the requirements for premises for floor area, furnishings, information and possibilities of maintaining proper hygiene. The health care authority's recommendations of a 1-metre distance between participants (2-metre distance, if there is singing) and the infection reduction measures and other recommendations from the health care authorities should also be observed.

If the meeting can be held as a video or telephone meeting, this can be a good alternative for the physical meeting; both for people who are at higher risk and for others.

### *Particular comments about the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark's Educational institutions*

- Practitioner courses are conducted under the same terms as reopening of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark's other activities.
- The ban on gatherings does not apply to educational activities and exams where physical presence are necessary. Which activities are resumed is decided by the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs according to recommendations from the educational institution and will be published on the website of the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs.

### *Measures to protect employees and volunteers at the workplace*

When the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark's premises are opened, the church's employees will meet at the workplace again. Employees at cemeteries, etc. who primarily work outdoors with tasks that do not involve significant human contact, continue to go to work.

It should be considered locally whether the workplace's procedures can be rescheduled, for example with continued work from home, staggered attendance, division of employees into teams, etc. See also the

recommendations and instructions below:

- Furnishings of workplaces and organisation of the work in both the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and other religious communities must occur in accordance with the health care authority's guidelines and recommendations.
- The same work environment rules apply for work at offices as for all other job functions. Therefore, the employers should implement measures to prevent risks of infection with coronavirus/COVID-19 as effectively as possible.
- Special information is prepared for the protection of employees against coronavirus infection/COVID-19 for work at offices: <https://at.dk/coronasider/coronasmitte-offentlig-kontor/>
- Special information is prepared for the protection of employees against coronavirus infection/COVID-19 in "the green area": <https://at.dk/coronasider/coronasmitte-det-groenne-omraade/>
- Recommendations from Danish Health Authority are prepared for people at higher risk, including safeguarding their work functions: <https://www.sst.dk/da/Udgivelser/2020/Haandtering-af-COVID-19-Anbefalinger-til-personer-i-oeget-risiko>.