

Excerpts from “Religion and Ceremony”

– Coronavirus.Vic.Gov.Au Website – @ 7th Dec 2020

[For Mountview Uniting Church; Weddings & Funerals info is not included]

Everyone has a role to play in slowing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Before you leave home:

- if you feel unwell and have any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) stay home, seek medical advice and get tested. Stay home while you wait for your test result
- you must carry a face mask at all times when you leave home, unless you have a lawful exemption.

When you are out of the home:

- check in when you arrive at a place of worship, do not share food, drink or other items
- wash or sanitise your hands regularly
- cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow
- wear a face mask when you cannot maintain 1.5 metres distance from other people
- keep at least 1.5 metres distance between yourself and others
- wash your hands when you get home

Are places of worship open?

Yes, all places of worship of all denominations are able to open.

- Religious gatherings can be held indoors or outdoors. Venues must apply the two square metre rule to ensure people have enough room to maintain 1.5 metres distance between them. There are no group limits. The two square metre rule applies only if electronic record keeping is used. Otherwise, the four square metre rule applies.
- While attending a religious gathering there are steps you need to take to keep yourself and others safe including **not** sharing food, drink or other items.
- A venue can have indoor or outdoor religious gatherings at the same time. Ceremonial participants other than faith leaders are included in the two square metre rule only if electronic record keeping is used. Otherwise, the four square metre rule applies.
- You must carry a face mask with you at all times when you leave home, unless you have a lawful reason not to. It is strongly recommended that you wear a face mask when you cannot maintain 1.5 metres distance from other people.
- Places of worship can open to conduct weddings and funerals.
- Places of worship are open for private worship, for example individual prayer.

Places of worship can continue to be open for essential public support services. Essential public support services include food banks, help for people experiencing homelessness or other essential activities. Keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others.

Can I sing at a place of worship?

Yes, singing or chanting can occur as part of a religious ceremony, wedding or funeral.

Group singing is safest when the following measures are applied:

- singing outside, or in a well-ventilated room (with windows open)
- physical distancing of **at least 2 metres between each person** while singing
- short performances (of less than an hour)
- wearing a mask when singing indoors
- singing softly.

These measures are recommended to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Fans, free standing or ceiling, are **not** recommended for use in enclosed indoor spaces for singing. Performers should be **5 metres** from the audience, where practical.

Can food and drinks be served as part of, or after, a religious gathering?

Food or drink can be served as part of a religious gathering or after a religious gathering.

It is recommended that single use items are used to serve food or drink.

It is recommended that one person serves or distributes food or drinks. For example, one person uses the urn for hot water for tea.

Do people need to wear face masks while at religious gatherings?

It is strongly recommended that you wear a face mask at a religious gathering when you can't maintain 1.5 metres distance from other people. You must carry a face mask with you at all times when you leave home, unless you have a lawful reason not to.

Do I need to keep records?

A place of worship or venue hosting a wedding, funeral or religious gathering that is applying the two square metre rule must use electronic record keeping.

Otherwise, the four square metre rule applies.

The Victorian Government has a free QR code service available.

If not using electronic record keeping, manual record keeping is required.

Other

Faith leaders can visit homes to provide religious guidance, to perform rituals, or for care and compassionate reasons.

Excerpts from “Restricted Activity Directions Vic No.3” (the legal stuff) – DHHS.Vic.Gov.Au Website – @ 7th Dec 2020

[These directions must be read *together with all other Directions* currently in force]

9 Places of worship

- (1) A person who owns, controls or operates a **place of worship** in the State of Victoria may only operate that place of worship during the restricted activity period in accordance with these directions.

*Note: nothing in these directions is intended to prevent or otherwise affect the operation or use of a facility for emergency refuge, shelter or relief purposes in accordance with the emergency management arrangements under the **Emergency Management Act 2013**.*

- (2) A person who owns, controls or operates a place of worship in the State of Victoria may operate the place of worship if:
- (a) subject to paragraph (d), the number of persons permitted in each indoor space or outdoor space at any one time is limited to (with infants under one year of age not counting towards this limit):
 - (i) if the person uses electronic record-keeping, the number permitted by the density quotient; and
 - (ii) if the person does not use electronic record-keeping, the number calculated by dividing the total area of the indoor space or outdoor space accessible to members of the public (measured in square metres) by 4; and
 - (b) where the place of worship operates for the purpose of conducting a religious gathering or ceremony, the religious gathering or ceremony is conducted either at the place of worship or at an outdoor space proximate to the place of worship; and
 - (c) no food, drink, crockery, utensils, vessels or other equipment is permitted to be shared by participants; and
 - (d) any dancefloor is operated in accordance with clause 18.
- (3) Despite subclause (2), a person who operates a place of worship for the purpose of hosting an essential public support service (whether that service is provided on a voluntary basis or otherwise) is not required to comply with the limits in subclause (2)(a).

Examples: a food bank or a service for homeless persons.