

## **Pastoral Care and funerals during this season**

The current context has, in an instance, changed how the church engages with pastoral care. Much of what we associate with pastoral is not currently possible... physical presence, visitation etc. Ministers and pastoral care teams in local churches have been creativity trying to work out how to continue to connect with people and encourage them in their faith. The key pastoral questions for us are:

- how do we continue to be disciples of Jesus in this different season?
- How do we follow Jesus' command to 'love one another'?

In line with advice from authorities:

We have asked ministers and pastoral care teams to undertake their pastoral care from home, rather than physically visiting.

Guidance on funerals differs not just across the two jurisdictions but also with regard to what different funeral directors permit. Guidance also changes frequently. However as at 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020, the MCI guidance is:

For all funerals in the Republic of Ireland and funerals in Northern Ireland where the person's death is not related to Covid-19:

- Government guidance must be adhered to at all times, including social distancing
- No service can take place in a family home (social distancing is almost impossible in that circumstance) or in the Church building (the cleaning requirements would be too stringent following the service)
- If the Funeral Director is allowing the use of their chapel/church for a service the minister may officiate but there should be no more than 10 mourners
- The local government guidance re numbers at a graveside should be followed but again there should be no more than 10 mourners.

If the funeral is taking place in Northern Ireland, and is of a person who died with Covid-19 then this is the current government guidance to funeral directors

- Families should be advised that funeral services must be strictly private and that only immediate family (up to a maximum of 6) can attend. Those attending should not have been in close contact with the deceased, awaiting test results, displaying symptoms or currently self-isolating.
- A funeral notice may be placed in newspapers or using on-line services but the funeral arrangements should not be advertised
- MCI guidance that services should not take place in a church building or family home but only in a Funeral Home church/chapel applies