

24 March 2020

**Funeral provision in the Deanery of Wigan following COVID-19 guidance**

The Church of England in Wigan remains committed to offering funerals during this time of pandemic. We will still provide a high standard of care and support, as safely as possible, in accordance with instructions from the Government and National Church. However, following the PM’s statement of 23rd March, clearly how we provide Christian funerals and burials will have to change.

It is important to note that, like many organisations, a number of Church of England ministers are designated ‘at risk’ and therefore required to isolate, reducing available capacity. Nevertheless, those that can officiate at funerals will do as much as possible – so please work with us on this.

**Please understand that guidance could change at any time** in line with government announcements but if this happens, we will update you as quickly as possible.

**The following changes will be implemented with immediate effect**

**Type of service we can offer**

- With immediate effect, and in accordance with government instruction, we will only conduct funerals at the **crematorium** or **graveside** (both council cemeteries and churchyards). Funeral services cannot be held in church until further notice.
- The list of Church of England churchyards in Wigan Deanery where burials may take place are as follows: Please bear in mind that unless there is already a family plot, there is limited space within some of the churchyards listed.

St. John, Pemberton	St. Thomas, Ashton
St. Luke, Orrell	Holy Trinity, Ashton
St. David, Haigh	St. Aidan, Billinge
St. Elizabeth, Aspull	All Saint’s Hindley Green
St. Matthew, Highfield	St. John, Abram

## Arranging a funeral

- With effect from 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, all funeral service bookings for the whole of the Wigan Deanery will be co-ordinated through the **Church Wigan funerals team**.
- This will provide you with a single point of contact and remove the need for you to find and book a minister yourself, thereby speeding up the process of arranging a funeral.
- **To arrange a funeral please call our central number 01942 705641, or e-mail [funerals@churchwigan.org](mailto:funerals@churchwigan.org). Please note that this is the only contact number that should be used. Please do not contact the churches or clergy directly.**
- In emergencies you can call the Team Rector, Rev Neil Cook, on 07733 296850.
- An invoice will be e-mailed to you, and this should be paid before the funeral or takes place, by BACS only. We no longer accept cheques. Please pass this information onto your accounts department, so that they are aware of this.
- Our bank details are: Transforming Wigan Funerals, CAF Bank Ltd. Sort code 40-52-40, account number 00032773.
- To sustain the central funeral co-ordination service an administration fee of 5% of the statutory fee (not the total cost of the funeral) will be levied. The list of relevant fees is below and includes the admin fee.

## Clergy visits and pastoral support

- Contact between clergy and the bereaved family to plan the funeral and offer pastoral support will be conducted via telephone or video call.
- Follow up pastoral support will be offered to families.

## Funerals at the crematorium

- We agree with, and will abide by, the guidance issued by Wigan Council Bereavement Services on 23.03.20 regarding funeral services in council-run crematoria and cemeteries. We will support this in our service planning meetings with bereaved families by insisting that the maximum number of mourners is 10, and that these should be 'close family' and we will where possible discourage attendance of those who are designated 'at risk' (i.e. those over 70 or with underlying health conditions).
- We will ensure that the services at which we officiate are a maximum of 30 minutes (and may well make them shorter to minimise risk of cross-infection) to enable the sterilising of the crem before the next service. We will also not permit mourners to come forward and touch the coffin, nor will we encourage hand shaking in any way.

### Funerals at the graveside

- In Council-run cemeteries, we will abide by the above mentioned guidance.
- In burials in churchyards, we ask that family mourners do not act as coffin bearers, in order to minimise risk of infection.
- As per the Council guidance, a maximum of 10 people who are close family (and preferably not at risk) will be allowed at churchyard burials, and social distancing will need to be applied.

### Burial of ashes

- In line with Council policy we will not offer a service for burial of ashes until further notice. However, we will be happy to consider arranging memorial services and burial of ashes once the time of pandemic has passed.

As this is a changing situation, we thank you in anticipation of your support and patience in implementing this practice and hope that you will continue to work with Church Wigan to support the bereaved during these very difficult times.

As you may already be aware Church Wigan were due to centralise the Funeral booking facility during 2020 and the current situation has meant this arrangement has been brought forward earlier than anticipated.

Please see below the list of relevant fees during this time.

### WIGAN DEANERY FEES FOR FUNERALS 2020

<b>Funeral (No Church Service)</b>	
Service at the crematorium or funeral director's premises	£208.95
Service in the churchyard (including burial of the body)	£433.65
<b>Burial only</b>	
Burial of a body in the churchyard (on a separate occasion)	£364.35

Please note that a 5% administration fee is included in each of the above.