

Northern Ireland: Churches to Remain Open Despite Strict New Covid Lockdown



Churches in Northern Ireland will be permitted to keep their doors open despite the imposition of a so-called “circuit breaker” lockdown, reports [Premier](#).

The new restrictions, which will be in place for the next month, institute a mandatory requirement for worshippers to use face coverings when entering and exiting their church buildings.

In terms of the broader restrictions on social contact, bubbling will now be limited to a maximum of ten people from two households, with out-of-bubble overnight stays being strictly prohibited.

The hospitality sector will be shut down entirely, apart from deliveries and takeaways for food.

Funerals will be limited to 25 people with no post-service gatherings allowed and schools will also be closed from Monday for two weeks, with one of them coinciding with the half-term break.

Also from Monday, wedding ceremonies will be limited to 25 people with no

receptions allowed.

The DUP's MP for Strangford, Jim Shannon, told Premier he would have liked to see a more "localised" set of restrictions, not least because his area has the "second-lowest cases in the whole of the province".

Shannon said that churchgoers are already wearing masks and will continue to follow the latest guidance. In his own case, he said he wears a mask from the moment he gets in his car to go to church, and then keeps it on all the way through the service. The only time he removes it, he said, is during communion.

"We've adhered to those rules...rules that are maybe above and beyond what they had asked us to do," Shannon added, noting that he was "encouraged" that the government has let church continue during the pandemic. "[Churches] are very, very important for the emotional well being... the spiritual well being of people," he added.

[Source](#)