

Whiddon Valley Evangelical Church

Plan of practice for safe Baptism by Full Emersion during the time of Pandemic.

Whiddon Valley Evangelical Church is confessionally and in practice a Baptist Church. It is our long-established practice to Baptise by full immersion people on public profession of their faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His substitutionary death for sinners at Calvary. Baptism is a central and vital part of our religious practice. It can be delayed but not indefinitely.

The building we meet in for Worship was built with a permanent Baptistry that is sunk into the ground below where the portable pulpit normally stands. It is positioned at a distance from the congregation and there is space to move the Pulpit to one side of it.

Current Government guidance for the safe practice of full immersion is copied below. In **Red type** is the practice that will be adopted to ensure this is followed.

- Where full immersion in water is necessary as part of a ritual or ceremony, this should be very carefully planned following the rules below.
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- Those being immersed should be at least 2 metres away from the congregation and officiants at all times, except while they are being immersed.
Care will be taken that the front row of the congregation is at least 2 metres from the edge of the Baptistry. This will be done even if this results in an overall reduction in capacity. Those seated in the front row will not approach the Baptistry at any point in proceedings.
- Only one person should be immersed at any time and they should only be attended by a single officiant/clergy member.
This is our normal practice anyhow.
- During the immersion, clergy/the officiant can place their hands on the head of the person being immersed, but they should not 'cradle' the person or touch them in any other way
This guidance will be taken into account during the act of immersion.
- Clergy/the officiant should wash their hands after each person is immersed, or if this isn't possible, they should use hand sanitiser.

Hand sanitiser will be made available next to the Baptistry for use.

At the current time there is only plans for one person to be Baptised.

In addition to these guidelines care will be taken by the person being baptised and the Minister to go directly to a place where they can change into dry clothes.

Care is routinely taken anyhow to ensure that people present at the time do not come into contact with the water from the Baptistry after the service.

On occasions children have been encouraged to the front of the Church to get a better view of proceedings, during this time they will not do so.

The other changes in practice, such as use of hand sanitiser on entry and exit from the building, wearing of face coverings and social distancing will remain in place during any Baptisms during this time.