

To all clergy and lay ministers (including PTO)

Date: 6th May 2020
Our ref: MJS/rhw-bp9022

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Following a Zoom meeting of the House of Bishops yesterday, a statement was released regarding the use of church buildings - it can be read here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/house-bishops-backs-phased-approach-revising-access-church-buildings>

This very brief note is intended to clarify the situation in the Diocese of Leicester. We anticipate that further guidance will be needed following the planned government announcement on Sunday but for now, we want to make it clear that 'stage one' of the phased approach to the lifting of restrictions can be implemented immediately.

'Stage one' allows for individual ministers (clergy or lay leaders) to enter their church buildings for prayer or live streaming of a service. The buildings remain closed to the public and, in view of the continued restrictions imposed by the government, members of different households should not meet in the church buildings. This means that the individual minister may be accompanied by members of their own household but should not be accompanied by musicians or servers or other members of their congregations who are not part of their own immediate household.

In addition:

- Incumbents, or Area Deans where there is no incumbent, can in consultation with their churchwardens and bearing in mind their specific location, **appoint one person for each church** in their benefice to enter that church building.
- The appointed person should be the incumbent or a licensed or authorised minister, minister with permission to officiate, churchwarden, or, where there is no churchwarden, one member of the PCC.
- The appointed person should be entering the church building for any or all of the following
 - (i) pray the Daily Office and/or celebrate the Eucharist on behalf of the community they serve,
 - (ii) live stream or pre-record worship,
 - (iii) ring one bell to mark prayers being said or mark events (e.g. Clap for Carers, VE Day anniversary),
 - (iv) check the fabric of the building.

We also want to add that nobody should feel under any obligation to use their church building at this time. For a variety of reasons, you may prefer to continue praying or live streaming from your own home. In particular, the government advice continues to be that those aged over 70 or with pre-existing medical conditions should remain at home.

If you have queries about this advice, please consult your Archdeacon. The advice of the national church will continue to be updated on their website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

We will write again at greater length in the next week or so, but for now, our continued thanks for all you are doing in the face of so many changes.

Yours in Christ,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
Bishop of Loughborough