***Update from the Bishops on funerals in church buildings – sent to all clergy and lay ministers (cc churchwardens) 10th June 2020***

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The House of Bishops has now advised that funerals can take place in church buildings from 15th June but we do stress that this guidance is permissive and not prescriptive. We are fully aware that for many churches it will not yet be possible to do so safely and understand the extra burden this will bring you in terms of expectation in your communities and pressure from bereaved families.

It is the decision of the incumbent and PCC whether or not to conduct funerals in each church, and you must be confident in doing so that the latest guidelines (found on our website and attached to this email) are fully met. It is important that every church’s first priority is to protect health and safety, and therefore only conduct funerals in church if the risk assessment shows compliance with these safety guidelines is feasible.

If a building cannot open because, for example, staff or volunteers needed to comply with the health and safety guidance are ill, choosing to stay at home or shielding, or if it could not be easily cleaned, it is acceptable for the PCC to delay the commencement of funerals in church. The funeral may take place at a local crematorium or at the graveside if the decision is taken not to open the church.

If you are unable to meet the safety requirements, you will need to explain that the church is not yet able to host funerals for health and safety reasons set by the Government in conjunction with the Church of England at national and diocesan level.

We recognise that you continue to put huge effort into being alongside people for pastoral care as best you are able. In communicating with your community about the church’s decision on funerals, it would be helpful to reassure them that the church continues to support those who are grieving in pastoral ways even though our buildings are not yet open as we would wish.

Bishop’s Leadership Team colleagues have agreed that funeral fees should continue to be waived - even for those which are conducted in church buildings - until the start of July.

Please be assured of our continued prayers and support.

 

The Rt Revd Martyn Snow                                                                               The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani

Bishop of Leicester                                                                                         Bishop of Loughborough