

**To clergy and lay ministers
cc Churchwardens and PCC secretaries**

Date: 20th October 2020
Our ref: MJS/rhw-bp9223

Dear brothers and sisters,

We thought it timely to write to you again as we face continued uncertainty over the pandemic and lockdown. The next few months could be particularly difficult as so many of us are fatigued and it is proving so hard to plan for what would usually be one of the busiest and most significant seasons in the church's calendar. So we want to outline a few thoughts about how we might approach the coming months.

Firstly, the days between November 1st and 11th are a season of national remembering, when people move from thinking about personal losses through to remembering those who have died serving their country. As we continue to struggle with the Covid-19 pandemic, it will be an especially poignant time as more people search for meaning and hope. This will potentially create even greater pressure on clergy and lay ministers as you negotiate competing demands from those both within and outside the local church community.

We are copying this letter to Churchwardens and PCC Secretaries because you have a key role in helping to manage expectations. It will simply not be possible to do everything you would want to do, or others will want you to do. Please support one another in finding a good balance between serving others, looking after yourselves and keeping everyone safe. And please know that we are praying for you and will support you in whatever decisions you make about the best way to mark this season.

The Church of England has a dedicated [web page](#) for this time of year including resources of various kinds. There will be national online services broadcast through the Church of England's website and social media. For free resources and a range of suggestions for Remembrance and Armistice Day, see [here](#). The Royal British Legion also has ideas on how to get involved [here](#).

For resources and ideas on promoting and planning your All Souls' Services, including suggestions to make use of inside, outside and online space, see [here](#).

Secondly, as you think ahead to Advent and Christmas, again there will be many opportunities to engage with people who are desperate to mark these seasons and to find 'comfort and joy'. But there will also be expectations that you simply cannot fulfil, if, as seems very likely, there are still restrictions on social gatherings. Please take a look at the [national church resources](#).

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Please also note the following and contact your Archdeacon if you have additional queries:

- Arrangements for services will need to be clearly sign-posted through your website, A Church Near You, social media, posters and newsletters/notice sheets to avoid disappointment and confusion.
- If people need to book to attend, then perhaps leave a few spare seats in case of on the day arrivals who are not aware of this arrangement.
- Please ensure that your plans meet both government and national church guidelines, remembering that, as things stand, parts of the city and county are operating in different tiers of the government's rules. For local government advice, please contact either the Environmental Health Officer for District/Borough Councils or Trading Standards for County Council.
- It is more important than ever that any arrangements for Remembrance Sunday or Armistice Day are agreed with the local civic authorities. It may help you to know that the large-scale Remembrance events in Leicester have been moved online to ensure everyone's safety.

Shaped by God Together

We have just completed a large scale story gathering exercise with over five hundred people sharing your stories, reflections and experiences of church and faith during lockdown. These have been honest stories, some positive and some acknowledging difficulty and pain. They are now being re-read by diverse groups of people from all across our diocese, to see what patterns emerge from them and what insight they can give us about how God is at work amongst us and through us. We are now able to invite others from the communities of the diocese to join in with this ongoing sense-making process at a special on-line 'Reading the Stories' day on Saturday 14th November. We'll publish more details in the coming days. Further information about the process including resources and videos can be found [here](#) and we will also share material from the Bishops' Study days on these pages.

Finally, can we encourage you once again to book a retreat day at Launde Abbey and to make sure you are getting regular breaks and holidays (even if you cannot travel). There are currently spaces available for the retreat day on 18th November and 1st December – book by emailing bishops.office@leicestercofe.org Future dates for retreat days in early 2021 are on the [wellbeing page](#) of the diocesan website. We recommend that all clergy take the minimum of a full week off after Christmas and if this is not yet booked in your diary, please do so now! Financial assistance is available – please contact us.

With our continued prayers and thanks for your ministry,



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani
Bishop of Loughborough