



***From the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England,
to be shared with all clergy***

24 March 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Following the Prime Minister's announcement last night, it is imperative that for the health of the nation and in order for the National Health Service itself to manage the increase in those requiring medical help, the Church of England strictly observes the new guidelines on staying at home and only making journeys that are absolutely necessary, such as shopping for essential items and to take daily exercise.

Our church buildings must now be closed not only for public worship, but for private prayer as well and this includes the priest or lay person offering prayer in church on their own. A notice explaining this should be put on the church door (please find template attached). We must take a lead in showing our communities how we must behave in order to slow down the spread of the Coronavirus.

We must also do all that we can to provide resources and support for those who are isolated, fearful and vulnerable. But we have to do this from our homes. A number of national online resources (<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>) including weekly streamed services and daily audio, as well as additional worship provision on the BBC are there to help us, and more are on their way. Please do all that you can to point people to this content.

It is also imperative that as the Church of Jesus Christ, called to offer hope and light in the darkness of this world's ills, we maintain a praying presence for our community, though from today onwards this must happen from our hearts and from our homes.

Our Church buildings are closed but the Church must continue to support and encourage our communities making use of telephones and other forms of technology to keep in touch with people and ensure pastoral care is maintained, and as shepherds of Christ's flock we are committed to making this happen.

In summary, these are the guidelines we must all now follow:

1. Our church buildings are closed for public worship and for private prayer.
2. Emergency baptisms can take place in hospital or at home, though subject to strict hygienic precautions and physical distancing as far as possible.
3. There can be no weddings in church buildings until further notice.
4. Funerals can only happen at the Crematorium or at the graveside. Only immediate family members can attend (if the crematorium allows) – that is, spouse or partner, parents and children, keeping their distance in the prescribed way.
5. Live streaming of services is more important than ever and is still permissible from homes. We encourage us all to consider how we can be as creative as possible with streaming services and other resources. There are many, many fantastic examples of churches and clergy using technology to reach and engage communities. Read more guidance here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/digital-labs/labs-learning-blog/beginners-guide-going-live-your-service-or> .
6. Foodbanks should continue where possible under strict guidelines and may have to move to be delivery points not places where people gather. If you can do consider making a financial contribution to your nearest foodbank.

These are unprecedented times. We are all having to get used to being the Church differently. It is not easy. However, our belonging to Christ has never been measured by the number of people in church on a Sunday morning (though we long for the day when this way of knowing Christ can return) but by the service we offer to others. Therefore, and despite these very harrowing restrictions, please do all that you can to minister to your people safely, especially to the sick, the vulnerable and the poor.

With our thanks to you all for you are bearing at this extraordinary time. We know that God is with us and we pray with you that in the midst of all this pain and sorrow we can remain focussed on the One who gives us hope.

With every blessing,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Justin Cantuar' and the signature on the right is 'Sentamu Eboracensis'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

+Justin Cantuar

+Sentamu Eboracensis