

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave

Bishop's House, 22 The Close, Lichfield WS13 7LG
T: 01543 306001. E: bishop.michael@lichfield.anglican.org



THE BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

26th June 2020

TO: Licensed clergy, lay ministers and church wardens in the Diocese of Lichfield

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I send you my heartfelt greetings as we continue to serve and learn together in these ever-changing times. Again, along with Bishop Clive and Bishop Sarah, I want to emphasise how thankful I am for all that you are doing in our churches and communities.

The Government's announcement that church buildings can reopen for public worship and small weddings from 4th July is welcome news and is a significant step on the journey out of lockdown. We await further guidance from the Government and the national Church of England, next week, on what this will look like in practice for churches. When this guidance is available it will be shared on [our website](#) and in our weekly [Bulletin](#). Please also check the [Church of England website](#) for updates. In the meantime, please bear the following in mind as you prepare locally:

COVID-safe buildings

If churches are planning to open for public worship, it is important that they should do their best to ensure that buildings are 'COVID-safe' before, during and after services. This will include making provision for physical distancing and hand cleansing for all using the building. All churches should carry out a risk assessment – the current template for re-opening for individual prayer or public worship is [here](#). This is due to be updated next week. People should be encouraged not to stay in church buildings after services for conversation or refreshments.

Opening church buildings for worship

Many churches will celebrate with joy the chance to meet 'in person' together again for worship. However, there is no immediate pressure for you to resume public worship from 4th July, and you will need to take into account your local circumstances. If you anticipate a delay of more than a few weeks before resuming public worship, including beyond 1st August (see **Personal Risk Factors** below), please approach your Area Bishop to seek a dispensation from the legal requirement to hold a Sunday service in each benefice every week.

Singing and Holy Communion

We anticipate that forthcoming guidance will confirm that communal singing will not be allowed. Holy Communion will be administered in one kind only.



**DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD**



The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave

Bishop's House, 22 The Close, Lichfield WS13 7LG
T: 01543 306001. E: bishop.michael@lichfield.anglican.org



THE BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

Personal risk factors – including Shielding

For clergy who have been shielding, personal safety should continue to be prioritised, and duties can still be performed remotely. For all in our churches the guidance to follow regarding who can do what is currently the advice already published by the Church of England on [Personal Risk Factors](#). The full Government guidance on those shielding, termed clinically extremely vulnerable, is [here](#), with current guidance reaching to 1st August. Those in a clinically vulnerable category are now treated under the same general [guidance](#) as everyone. Putting these together allows a local judgment to be made with the risk factors assessed and any mitigating measures taken for protection needed.

I strongly urge those of you with personal risk factors, and those over 70 years old, to take extra care, in accordance with the guidance. However, it is up to each individual to decide the type of ministry or voluntary activity each is able to perform. Clergy who are within these categories should inform the Area Bishop, or the Bishop with extended pastoral oversight, of the areas in which they feel they can be involved.

Weddings

Churches will be able to hold weddings again from 4th July, currently with a limit of 30 people attending. (This limit does not apply to normal church worship services, where numbers will depend on local context). Updated advice is available [here](#) from the Registry including information on the calling of banns, the role of surrogates and fees.

Looking ahead

Of course, when buildings do re-open, church services will feel different due to the necessary restrictions. Your work has continued in new and creative ways during lockdown, including online; and I am thankful that this will continue in many places even as people begin to gather again in buildings. I am sure that many of you also look forward to welcoming people into your buildings who may have encountered church online, over the phone or through your community outreach during lockdown.

I know that so many of you have had little or no annual leave in recent months; I encourage you to take time away when possible as opportunities open up. The autumn will bring new challenges and opportunities to us all, and we need to be rested and refreshed to address those. You are in my prayers as you continue this vital work, to be people of hope sharing the changeless love of Christ in the midst of the change all around us. Please pray for me and for my fellow bishops.

With my warm good wishes,

Michael Ipgrave



**DIOCESE OF
LICHFIELD**



**DISCOVERING
THE HEART OF GOD**



**GROWING
DISCIPLES**



**REACHING
NEW GENERATIONS**



**TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES**



**PRACTISING
GENEROSITY**