

Bishop of Lichfield's guidance on the current situation – 8 February 2021

Although most churches in our diocese are closed for public worship, there are a small number who continue to hold services or are open for private prayer. There is no obligation to hold services in buildings or to open churches for private prayer in this period; Bishop Michael's general dispensation from canonical requirements for worship in any benefice currently runs until at least 31 March. This will be reviewed in late February.

The guidance remains the same as the vaccination programme rolls out, so vaccination should not be counted as a factor in deciding whether to remain open or to re-open.

Those that do remain open either for public worship or private prayer are asked to:

- Complete a weekly [risk assessment](#), paying particular consideration to your local context (see p5 of risk assessment) including the latest [infection rates](#) or any local variations of the virus, and taking into account local Public Health advice (see the [diocesan website](#) and your local authority website). We recommend that you share your weekly risk assessments with your Rural Dean.
- Carefully follow all national guidance on [conducting public worship](#) which includes guidance on singing, receiving [Holy Communion](#) and [test and trace](#).
- Not ask priests or other ministers to travel from outside the local area to take services.
- Ensure that people disperse immediately at the end of services.
- Follow [Public Health England advice](#) if there is a suspected Covid infection or outbreak linked to your church and immediately inform your Rural Dean and Archdeacon.

For those who are currently closed for public worship or private prayer, in the unlikely event that you are considering the possibility of reopening in the coming weeks, please take into account all of the above and consult with your Rural Dean and Archdeacon before reopening, submitting a new [risk assessment](#) which should include a brief summary of changes in local circumstances.

As always please consult the [diocesan website](#) for the latest guidance and information.