

Phased Approach to Revising Access to Church Buildings

On 5 May 2020 The House of Bishops affirmed that individual diocesan bishops can issue guidance about the first stage of a gradual easing of restrictions on our buildings and activities whilst **keeping our church buildings closed**.

As a result Bishop David is now issuing some new permissive guidance that is applicable from Friday 8 May 2020:

1. Clergy can enter the church building for any or all of the following
 - pray the Daily Office and/or celebrate the Eucharist on behalf of the community they serve,
 - live stream or pre-record worship.

In situations where a parish is in vacancy or the clergy person is self-isolating it can be a Reader, ALM, Churchwarden where appropriate.

2. It must be only one clergy person on any one occasion. It need not always be the same person as long as sufficient care is taken to minimise risk of cross infection.
3. Clergy may be accompanied by members of their household with whom they are living. However, those from other households (organists, musicians, camera operators etc) must NOT attend.
4. Only the clergy (and any of their household) should enter and the door should be locked.
5. Clergy, especially those with underlying health problems, or who are shielding people in their household with such problems, should not feel under any obligation to do this.
6. Consideration must be given to what cleaning will be needed to make the church safe from virus transmission risks (e.g. disinfecting gates, door handles, surfaces etc).

7. Hand hygiene advice provided by the government should also be followed.

Our priority must be to act responsibly in order to safeguard ourselves and other people from infection. If you have any specific questions then please contact pandemic@manchester.anglican.org

Clergy who are content with leading worship from home for the time being, having set everything up to that end, should feel under no obligation to switch back into the church. Likewise, it is perfectly fine to continue sharing services which are recorded or streamed by colleagues.

Meetings of the Diocesan Strategy Group and Bishop's Leadership Team will take place early next week to determine the appropriate next steps and further advice will be issued that takes account of the decisions that are made.

The decisions that will be made will take account of our diocesan circumstances and the prevalence of the virus. At the time of preparing this advice the North West of England is at the epicentre of the pandemic in the UK – with virus hotspots in our diocese. Minimising the risks of virus transmission and protecting the health and well-being of clergy, their families and parishes is paramount in these considerations.

Decisions on opening churches up for funeral services will be taken at a later stage, as part of re-opening churches for wider public access, not at the present stage.

Wednesday 6 May 2020