

BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 14

To the Licensed Clergy of Peterborough Diocese

1 June 2020



Dear friends

Cry Freedom!

Welcome to June, and a strange limbo-land between lockdown and freedom. This is a time for a degree of rejoicing, as the worst effects of the virus seem to be over, but certainly not a time for complacency. For the sake of mental health, of the economy, and of our life in community, we must start to re-emerge; but for the most vulnerable, for the NHS, and for avoiding a resurgence of the illness, we must remain cautious.

In this new land, some of us and some of our people will be impatient to get out and about, and return to as near “normal” as possible. Others will be wary and tentative. Others, of us and of our people, will be frightened. Still others won't be allowed out anyway for a while longer. As we re-emerge, we will need to be sensitive to people's feelings: to impatience, anxiety, fear, and frustration. We will need to be wise and loving pastors to all our people.

This is where things will get confusing, new permissions will be announced by the government (often with conditions attached), more guidance documents will appear on the [Church of England Coronavirus web page](#). There will be more discretion for dioceses and parishes, possibly local lockdowns in some areas, some churches able to do more than others, some clergy more restricted than others: in short, a postcode lottery of provisions, which may be necessary and right, but which will inevitably lead to complaints of unfairness.

As the possibilities of public worship, open churches, pastoral visiting, and so on, emerge, I know that some of our churches will not be able to open while others will, and that some of us as clergy will not be able to offer the face-to-face ministry that others can. This will be a slow, gradual, confusing, journey to freedom. Please be assured that I will give my full support to those clergy and churches whose re-emergence or re-opening has to be delayed for whatever reasons.

Do let your Rural Dean and your neighbouring clergy know what you are, and are not, able to do; and let's be sure to support each other in this. If you need a conversation about your situation, the Archdeacons, my Chaplain, and I are here for you: contact us by email and we will gladly arrange a phone or zoom call.

Bishop Donald	(via Bishop's PA, Joanne Gibson)	e-mail Joanne
Canon Tim Alban Jones	Bishop's Chaplain	e-mail Tim
Richard Ormston	Archdeacon of Northampton	e-mail Richard
Gordon Steele	Archdeacon of Oakham	e-mail Gordon

But not quite yet!

Some of us who are working on the recovery process were surprised that the Prime Minister spoke on Thursday evening about shops and car showrooms but not places of worship. The Communities Secretary yesterday mentioned churches but gave no dates. The Bishop of London, who leads the recovery group, writes:

A lot of people will feel disappointed and frustrated by that. While the Church is not a building, for many people these sacred spaces are an incredibly significant place in their lives - and in their faith - as well as being at the centre of community life. So we will continue to work with the Government to ensure that we can begin to reopen our places of worship in a phased way as soon as it is deemed safe and practical to do so. We have already been actively planning to that end and have developed detailed advice to help local churches plan for the practical challenges of enabling opening for individual prayer as well as weddings, funerals and other important rites to take place and then, in due course, a resumption of public worship services.

I think it likely that more announcements will follow during this month, but I am sorry that we cannot yet be specific about church weddings, funerals, or other services.

Clergy Wellbeing

With all the confusion and the pressures, it is not surprising that some clergy are feeling anxious or stressed. I commend the St Luke's Healthcare **Virtual Wellbeing Programme** which you can find [here](#).

Sermons

My Sunday sermons will continue to be available until further notice. This is just to say that the sermon for 28 June (Trinity 3) will be based on the gospel for St Peter's Day, 29 June, as I know that a number of parishes have that as their patronal.

Please [email your sermon request](#) at any time, specifying which Sunday you want a sermon for, and whether you want audio only or audio-visual.

With love in Christ

+ Donald