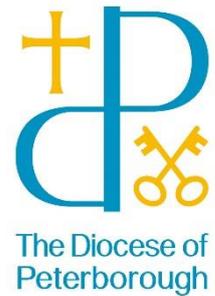


BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 15

To the Licensed Clergy of Peterborough Diocese

8 June 2020



Dear friends

How are you feeling today?

- Tired. This existence is exhausting: I need a break.
- Frustrated. I want to get out there, see people, and do my ministry.
- Confused. What is happening next, and how can we make it work?
- Despairing. Will there be room for me, or for the church as I know it?
- Fearful. I or my loved ones may become seriously ill or even die.
- Excited. New things are happening, and we want to be part of that.

All those feelings, in various combinations, are present among us as clergy, and among our people. That is really ok.

Talk about it. Take time off if you need to: the work can wait; I'm taking an extra day this week, and next week: not as part of holiday or annual leave, but because it might just help. Make plans, but be flexible with them.

Re-opening

It is good to have an initial move from the government towards re-opening churches. Please note that what is being permitted from next Monday is supervised private prayer: the church building would need to be staffed, as well as complying with the guidance on cleaning, social distancing, and so on. Full guidance will appear as one or more documents [here](#) in the next day or so.

Let's be realistic. Many of our churches, especially in small villages, or where key people are vulnerable, might not be able to meet the conditions for this stage of re-opening. This is ok, and neither you nor the churchwardens or PCC should feel guilty if you can't re-open yet. A suitable notice on your church door, and if applicable on your parish or benefice website, explaining that the building will re-open at a later stage – and reminding people that the church itself is still alive and active – will be a perfectly acceptable alternative to re-opening if that is what you need to do.

If you can comply with the guidance for supervised re-opening for private prayer: go for it! That is another way in which you can bless your community.

Wedding Fees

It seems likely that small-scale church weddings will be permitted from mid-July, and possibly outdoor “church” weddings from early July if new laws are pushed through. Since Sunday worship won’t have re-started by then, it will not be possible to call banns. This means that a common licence would be necessary instead: obtainable through your [deanery surrogate](#) or direct from the [Diocesan Registry](#). I am conscious that this costs more than banns: £200 compared to around £60. A number of you have asked if that fee can be reduced in these circumstances, but I very much regret that this is a legal fee, not a diocesan one, and the diocese is not able to reduce it. However, in cases where the reading of banns has begun when the lockdown occurred, the Diocesan Chancellor has agreed a £50 reduction to £150. If you want to claim this on behalf of a couple, please [contact the Registry](#).

Repeating myself, and I’ll say this again as often as I need to: these emerging permissions to move towards normal service are not compulsory. Clergy, just as much as churches, may not be able to offer such ministry themselves. That is ok. We can find cover, ideally from within your deanery, and I will support you.

Church Funerals

You may see on the government statements that small-scale funerals can also take place in churches. This has been permitted throughout, but the House of Bishops decided early on (rightly in my view) that we would restrict ourselves to crematorium and graveside services. Difficult early experiences demonstrated that there was no way we could police or steward the numbers or the social distancing in church buildings, so for the sake of public health we decided not to do that yet.

Hospital Chaplains

Thank you to those who have sent amendments to the list of hospital chaplains which I included a fortnight ago. The corrected list is attached to this email.

Bishop John

I am very pleased to report that John is making a recovery, albeit quite slow, from covid-19. He is starting work (gently) this week, though it may be a little while before he is back to full health.

With love in Christ

+ Donald