

## BISHOP'S BULLETIN No 29

### To the Licensed Clergy of Peterborough Diocese

30 November 2020



Dear friends

The whole of our diocese will enter Tier 2 on Wednesday, alongside Oxford, St Albans, and Ely, to the south and east. Our neighbours to the west and north, Coventry, Leicester and Lincoln, will be in Tier 3. This is likely to remain the case for some months – unless we also go up to Tier 3, which we only just escaped.

Church buildings can re-open for public worship, but with the familiar restrictions of “hands – face – space”, singing limited to a small group, communion in one kind, no refreshments and no staying on to chat after the service. Planning for Christmas will be interesting: you might want to consider a pre-booking and ticketing system.

There may be some loosening of restrictions. I think it likely that outdoor carol singing will be permitted, and that a way will be found to allow communion in both kinds. Watch this space (and keep an eye on the C of E guidance documents [here](#)).

Some people are expressing anger at the new restrictions, perhaps missing the fact that 500 people a day are still dying of covid, or that without these rules hospitals would not be able to cope over the winter. Whatever you feel about the Tiers, or the understandable but risky Christmas exceptions, most of us are simply exhausted by the changes and the anxiety, at least as much as by the restrictions themselves.

My main concern in all this is the wellbeing of our clergy. Please don't take on more than you can cope with. As the Chief Medical Officer says, “Just because something is permitted, that doesn't mean you have to do it”. I am very conscious that many of our wonderful retired clergy are currently unable to provide cover, so I remind you that my sermons for each Sunday and for Christmas are available from [Rachel Lomas](#) in my office, and I am also now giving some unusual permissions, to help clergy get good time off after Christmas.

I normally give blanket permission for any parish in the diocese to offer Communion by Extension, led by a Deacon or a Reader, on Christmas Day. This year I extend that to include Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 December. Very exceptionally, I also give permission, if you can't get cover, for you not to have a Communion service on Sunday 27 December – and, if you can't get anyone to lead a Service of the Word, not to hold public worship at all that day.

## **Advent Meditations**

Bishop Andrew Proud is offering a series of Quiet Evenings on the four Wednesdays of Advent. I warmly commend these. Full details, and booking, [here](#).

## **Visiting Care Homes**

Most parish clergy have been unable to visit parishioners in care homes, and, unless things change dramatically, are unlikely to be able to do so until Easter. However, a few have been able to visit and minister by having weekly covid tests as part of the staff testing programme. It is likely that as the new ten-minute tests are rolled out this requirement might increase to twice a week, but that still seems a good option.

If you would like to get back into the care homes in your parish, and you are prepared to wear the appropriate PPE, you could ask if you might be included on the staff regular testing list and thus gain access. I think that is definitely worth a try.

## **These Bulletins**

I send these bulletins to our licensed clergy, but a few clergy with PTO, and some lay ministers, have expressed interest in seeing them. You have my full permission to share them with a ministry team, a PCC or leadership team, even to put them on the church notice board or notice sheet or website. They appear anyway on the diocesan website soon after I send them out: by all means point people to that [here](#).

Blessings for Advent, our great season of hope.

With love in Christ

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