

# Church is Changing

## Funerals may go back into church

The House of Bishops has met to discuss a range of issues around Covid-19 and approved further advice on funerals, the celebration of Holy Communion and ordinations.

The guidance advises that funerals may be carried out in church buildings from June 15th, but only if it is safe for individual churches to do so.

Access the latest guidance [here](#).

It has been issued in light of the easing of restrictions on individual private prayer in places of worship, the reduction in death rates linked to Covid-19, and the pastoral needs of those who have been bereaved. It is in line with guidance from Public Health England.

In keeping with the Church of England's wider approach to a phased reopening of places of worship, it will be up to each diocesan bishop and senior team how they use the guidance to support churches and cathedrals, depending on their local context.

The House of Bishops noted that this guidance is permissive and not prescriptive. If a building could not open because staff were ill or shielding or could not be easily cleaned, for example, it would be a local decision by those with authority over the building as to whether the permission was used or not.

The funeral may take place at a local crematorium or cemetery if the decision is taken not to open the church, as is the case now.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, who chairs the Church of England's Recovery Group, said:

"While the restrictions on everyday life necessary to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus pandemic have been difficult for us all, I'm only too aware that those who have lost loved ones have suffered most of all. I know that the grieving process has been even more difficult because of the limitations on funerals themselves.

"There are now least some signs of hope of an improvement with a fall both in the number of new infections and the death rate, but there will still, sadly, have to be significant limitations on how we mark funerals for some time to come.

"Nevertheless the House of Bishops has agreed that in light of the changing circumstances it is time to review our advice so that it will soon be possible for funeral services to be conducted inside church buildings following Government guidelines.

"At the same time we are actively planning for a wider phased reopening of places of worship when it is safe and practical to do so and look forward to the time when we can meet and worship together again in our buildings which mean so much to so many."