

“We are not stopping church, we are not closing anything, we ARE saying 'church is changing'.”

Bishop Nicholas has written to the Diocese in light of the latest guidance from the Archbishops ([here](#)) that all public worship has been suspended.

Bishop Nicholas said:

"The headline is that public worship will have to stop for the time being."

Church is changing.

"Our usual pattern of Sunday services and other midweek gatherings must be put on hold. This is with immediate effect.

"Our churches will remain open for prayer."

The Bishop said:

"Buildings can stay open. We are not stopping church, we are not closing anything, we ARE saying 'church is changing'.

"Weddings and funerals can go ahead where it is possible to observe social distancing (2m) based on common sense applied locally in buildings that are usually capable of accommodating this."

Bishop Nicholas also encouraged everyone to join in the National Day of Prayer on Sunday and place a lighted candle in their window.

"It is Mothering Sunday, so a good day to give thanks for the source of our life and care of one another. Resources are being made available for people to use at home.

"Wherever you are this Sunday please do join in this day of prayer and action and remember specially those who are sick or anxious and all involved in our Health Service.

"As one action we are calling on everyone to place a lighted candle in their window at 7.00 p.m, if it is safe to do so, as a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished."

Read the full letter below.

St Patrick's Day
17th March 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters

As circumstances change, so does government policy on the basis of the best scientific advice available. [This latest guidance from the Archbishops](#) follows on from what was announced yesterday.

The headline is that public worship will have to stop for the time being.

Our usual pattern of Sunday services and other midweek gatherings must be put on hold. This is with immediate effect.

Our Churches will remain open for prayer.

Buildings can stay open. We are not stopping church, we are not closing anything, we ARE saying 'church is changing'.

Weddings and funerals can go ahead where it is possible to observe social distancing (2m) based on common sense applied locally in buildings that are usually capable of accommodating this. Of course, weddings can be done differently with the couple, two witnesses and the priest - like one of the most memorable I have conducted. However, given the social constraints that are now in place, many couples may want to postpone.

The care of the bereaved will be even more important. The care of the dead was one of the ways in which the early Church was seen to offer a distinctive witness.

Look for ways to encourage people to pray privately, in their homes or online groups. There is an opportunity for more but different rather than less. Already some have been looking to livestream worship. This continues to be possible and may be worth exploring if you have the means to do so.

The *Daily Service* on BBC R4 Longwave Mon - Fri at 09.45, *Sunday Worship* on BBC Radio 4 at 08.10 and *Choral Evensong* on BBC Radio 3 on Wednesdays at 15.30 and Sundays at 15.00 might prove to be even more valuable to those who would otherwise have been in church.

Sunday will be a national day of prayer. It is Mothering Sunday, so a good day to give thanks for the source of our life and care of one another. Resources are being made available for people to use at home. People are invited to light a candle at 7.00pm and place it in the window where it is safe to do so.

Sunday will be a national day of prayer. It is Mothering Sunday, so a good day to give thanks for the source of our life and care of one another. Resources are being made available for people to use at home. Wherever you are this Sunday please do join in this day of prayer and action and remember specially those who are sick or anxious and all involved in our Health Service. As one action we are calling on everyone to place a lighted candle in their window at 7.00 p.m, if it is safe to do so, as a sign of solidarity and hope in the light of Christ that can never be extinguished.

For those who were still planning to come to the Chrism Mass at the cathedral on Maundy Thursday, I confirm it will not be possible for this service to take place. I hope a very small service for the blessing of oils will be possible and we are exploring the possibility of it being live streamed so that those who want to participate will be able to do so online.

It has been heartening to see how local churches have been developing responses to this unfolding emergency, often in partnerships with others. Please do all you can to ensure that people in your community are cared for by continuing to do what the Church does - loving God and loving your neighbour as yourself. We are particularly concerned about those who are vulnerable. The need for food banks to be well stocked is especially important.

We will need to keep in contact in all the ways we can. The bishops and archdeacons continue to be available by phone and e mail (although Bishop Andrew is currently confined to his home because of symptoms in the family).

Pray for one another and use the opportunities of these disturbing events to do all you can to the greater glory of God in service of God's people.

In Christ

+ Nicholas Scriven