

To clergy, LLMs and churchwardens

6th May 2020

Dear brothers and sisters

Thank you for the ways in which Church continues even though our buildings are closed in the present Coronavirus lockdown. You may already have seen [the statement issued following yesterday's meeting of the House of Bishops](#) on Zoom.

Coming out of 'Lockdown' is more complex than going into it. The House of Bishops has agreed to a staged process which is likely to follow a similar path to the country as a whole following what the Prime Minister outlines on Sunday evening. As a diocese, we will continue to use [the guidance of the Church of England](#) which is regularly reviewed and updated.

The decision of the House of Bishops means that there is no longer any inhibition on clergy praying in their own churches, either privately or to stream a service. This is a very limited provision. Even so, you will want to pay attention to other elements of the guidance about safety, cleaning, and social distancing. Those who are vulnerable because of health issues or age may understandably decide to continue to stay at home.

The decision is with immediate effect but, in reality, you are likely to have already made your plans for this Sunday. If there are services to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day, this Friday, they will have been prepared and are probably already recorded. So, it might be best to plan for clergy to be able to pray in church again starting next week. The parish will be pleased to know this happening by the tolling of a bell.

Although, as I write, I have not yet seen the national Church's guidance following the House of Bishop's decision, clergy should feel free to mark VE Day by ringing a church bell or flying a flag from their church buildings. Flag poles and bells can be dangerous so please take care and do a risk assessment before determining whether you will do this. The appropriate flag is the St George's Flag, not the Union Flag, because we are the

Church of England.

Many also want to ring a church bell in support of the NHS on Thursdays at 8.00pm. That is permissible as long as it is the Minister who does this. We are not yet open to a wider range of people entering our church buildings.

We have all felt the impact of Coronavirus on our families and in our communities. Some have been particularly badly hit but, as a region, the South West has been less badly affected than other parts of the country. Please continue to take great care. With the prospect of some relaxation of travel in the next few months and as a holiday destination, we do not want to find ourselves more badly affected by a second wave of infection. In other parts of the world, some church buildings and places of worship have been epicentres of infection. As we prepare to open up, the regular cleaning of church buildings and hygiene arrangements will be very important. Guidance will be provided when we get to that stage.

*Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,  
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;  
love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.*

JMC Crum 1872-1958

In Christ,

+Nicholas Sarum