

To licensed clergy, those holding PtO and LLMs in the Diocese of Salisbury

11 June 2020

Corpus Christi and St Barnabas the Apostle

Dear brothers and sisters

On the Feast of Corpus Christi which this year is a Fast, I am writing to say that following [the government's announcement](#) that places of worship may reopen for individual private prayer from the 15 June, the date has now been revised to the 13 June by the Prime Minister last night and confirmed today.

Please take the time that is needed for local decision in keeping with the latest guidance. Church buildings *may* open for private prayer but it is not a requirement that they do so. I hope that you and the people in your care will experience this first relaxation from the 'lockdown' as an encouragement on St Barnabas' day but not a demand for you and your church to do what may in some places be impossible.

A risk assessment must be carried out. There is a helpful template to assist with this in the Resources section about half way down the web page of [the national Church's guidance](#).

Before re-opening, the church should be cleaned and books, papers etc put away in accordance with the national Church's guidance.

The government had in its initial announcement of the announcement trailed that tourists are excluded from this provision. Although not specifically mentioned in question 1.17 of [the government's guidance](#), I think this point may be covered by question 1.14 which provides that indoor tourist attractions may not open yet. So our churches may be open for individual prayer but not as tourist attractions. I think that might be challenging to police in this diocese.

Churches are taking a variety of approaches. Some are planning to open for a few hours each day, others once or twice a week to reduce the need for cleaning on the basis that the virus does not survive for more than 72 hours without a body to host it. The cathedral is planning to open for four hours each day with a maximum of 40 people at any one time.

In line with advice from Public Health England, the Church of England has also revised its advice about funerals which may take place again in church. Again, the guidance may be found on [the national Church's web page](#).

Each church is different but you will need to be able to demonstrate that you are acting within the guidance and the risk assessment will help you to do this.

The guidance is changing all the time so do please keep referring back to the national Church's web page. If you need to talk with someone to help you interpret what is not always logical or consistent advice, please contact your archdeacon.

It will be demanding to move to the next stage in which some of us will continue to organise online worship as well as begin the process of reopening our buildings. I am grateful for all the effort that will continue to be needed as we continue to work through the implications of these very challenging times.

Meanwhile, the daily realities of a world in need continue to be very apparent. The Christian Gospel is life-giving and urgent.

God bless you and keep you,

+Nicholas Sarum