

To all licensed clergy, LLMs and PtOs
cc churchwardens

5 November 2020

Yesterday Parliament passed [the new lockdown Regulations](#) by a vote of 516-38. The Regulations cannot be amended. The increased spread of the virus is a serious risk to our country. We need to prevent it as far as is possible. As Churches, we will want to play our part in this within our communities.

Many Churches now have the experience of worship online and of Church meeting in a hybrid way that should mean it is possible to adapt again to these different requirements. Please see [the Church of England's website](#) for the latest guidance. At the time of writing, the latest update was dated 'Wednesday the 4 November at 17:05' promising an update following the passing of the new Regulations so please make sure that you keep an eye on the website for the update when it comes. In the meantime, some of the information (eg re weddings) is out of date.

In summary, the Regulations provide that private prayer in churches is permitted but not communal worship, though those leading worship online may do so in church. Funerals are limited to up to 30 people attending and linked commemorative events to 15 people attending. Weddings are not permitted except where one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover ('deathbed wedding'). These weddings are limited to six people.

Services around Remembrance Day and on Remembrance Sunday are going to be the immediate challenge. You will want to find ways for representatives to keep an important national and local event on behalf of the whole community. The Church of England's website is helpful but I think you are likely to feel there are some things in the Government's Regulations and Guidelines that do not fully deal with your questions and there may be inconsistencies. Whatever you do in your setting, please ensure there has been a risk assessment and that you can demonstrate compliance to the Regulations and Guidelines.

Churches have been vital to the development of networks of support for those who are isolated and most vulnerable. In one of the *Beyond the Present* episcopal deanery visits this week it was said that the most vulnerable are likely to be the least known. The existing networks will be alert to this but please ask the question about who is at risk of being missed out and how their needs are best met.

Prayer for the Nation

You may already have seen that the Archbishops have also written [a letter to the nation](#).

The Archbishops are encouraging daily prayer for the nation throughout the month. We are encouraged to pray daily for a specific area of national concern culminating in a collective moment of prayer at 6.00pm each evening, with cathedrals and churches across the country invited to ring a bell at this time. There is [a simple seven-day prayer cycle](#), praying for a specific area each day including the NHS and frontline workers, the bereaved, and those struggling with physical and mental ill-health, and for children and young people.

Prayers and other resources will be shared on social media with the hashtag #PrayerForTheNation.

Living in Love and Faith

Despite the lockdown, the publication of the resources for *Living in Love and Faith* will go ahead on the 9 November. This is a substantial project. The resources are high quality and very engaging. They include a substantial book, study guide and a suite of online resources for use in local groups.

To introduce active clergy and LLM's to this material, Bishops Karen and I invite you to join us for a one-hour online session on either [Friday the 13 November at 3.00pm](#) or [Friday the 27 November at 10.30am](#). Please click on the links or visit [the diocesan website](#) to book your place on one of these introductory sessions. I realise

that these are both Fridays which are not always convenient days for clergy but they were the only two dates that Bishop Karen and I could make. We will try to look for another day in the new year or, possibly, post a recording of one of the sessions on the website so that it is available there for whenever you may wish to view.

And finally

Thank you for all you are doing. Try to keep a pattern and rhythm to your life. Take more time off and more exercise than usual. Keep praying for the people in your care, for each other and for yourself.

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

God bless,

+Nicholas Sarum