

Cascade Messages
Tuesday 16 June 2020

01

Churches opening for Individual Prayer (private prayer)

- Places of worship are now permitted to be open for private prayer.

The agreed definition of individual prayer is: "Individual prayer within a place of worship is defined as a person or household entering the venue to pray on their own and not as part of a group, led prayer or communal act."

- Within the announcement relating to churches being open for individual prayer it is stated that: "Government is following the latest scientific and medical advice around how activities such as singing and/or playing instruments can best be managed safely. Further guidance will follow on this shortly, but for now such activity should be avoided."
- There is a specific FAQ on our diocesan website with links to relevant material provided by the Church of England and the Government. Particular attention is drawn to the following: -
 - a. On Friday 12 June 2020 the Church of England published a new advice document Using Church Buildings for Individual Private Prayer and Funerals. (This was previously named Access to church buildings during lockdown: general advice for incumbents, churchwardens and PCC members.) This document contains detailed practical information to support the opening of churches.
 - b. In preparing to open for individual private prayer parishes should complete the Parish Risk Assessment template. (updated again 12 June, version 3.0)

Parishes continue to be reassured:

- While it will be permissible for churches to open for private prayer it is not compulsory
- Individual PCCs can decide when and if they open for private prayer depending on local circumstances
- The diocese will support all parishes in the decisions that they make and offer practical advice as required.

It is emphasised that

- Individuals are self-isolating due to a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household and anyone showing symptoms of

	<p>COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) should not attend the place of worship due to the risk that they pose to others; they should self-isolate at home immediately with other members of their household.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback about individual experiences from churches being open for individual private prayer would be warmly welcomed by BLT.
<p>02</p>	<p><u>Funerals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funerals can now be conducted inside church buildings as long as they take place within government guidance. • There will be places where, for a number of reasons, it might not still be advisable to conduct funerals inside church buildings and the decision will be taken locally. • Full guidance was issued by the Church of England (9 June 2020) <u>Guidance on funerals in church buildings</u> and a new document <u>Using Church Buildings for Individual Private Prayer and Funerals</u>. (This was previously named Access to church buildings during lockdown: general advice for incumbents, churchwardens and PCC members.) was published on 12 June 2020. • In preparing to enable funerals to take place parishes should take account of these documents and also complete the parish <u>Risk Assessment Template</u> (updated 12 June, version 3.0) • Chapters are encouraged to offer mutual help in considering risk assessments for funerals in church buildings • A template letter has been developed by the Funerals Task Group and shared (via CMS) with all clergy on 15 June 2020. This seeks to assist with the very careful conversations that may need to take place with families. • The Funerals Task Group, chaired by Ian Jorysz, would welcome clergy sharing any experience of funerals in church. Ian can be reached at the following email address: BishopsChaplain@manchester.anglican.org • Clergy are thanked for informing the centralised funeral bookings of their funerals, as had been requested.



	<p>Although the centralised system will continue for the moment, there is no longer need to make this information known, now that the peak has passed.</p>
03	<p><u>Public Worship</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently there can be no public worship in a place of worship until further notice. <p>“a place of worship refers to all confined or enclosed spaces, within buildings or outdoors, used for religious ceremonies, collective prayer and worship or similar gatherings by faith organisations, such as a church”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government have indicated that they are considering how and when worship may recommence in our churches. • There is a commitment for this to happen as part of the easing of lockdown restrictions at the most appropriate opportunity. • At the present time there is no clarity about when this might be, how this might be or what measures will need to be in place.
04	<p><u>Organ Practice</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organ practice and organ maintenance in church buildings is now allowed under government guidance. • Organists must get permission to enter the building from the incumbent or Church Warden, and their access must be coordinated with those responsible for cleaning. • Organ practice and maintenance should not be taking place at the same time as the church is open for private prayer or when live streaming/recording is taking place.
05	<p><u>Diocesan Synod</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An informal session of Diocesan Synod took place on Saturday 13 June 2020. • A briefing note is provided with these cascade messages.
06	<p><u>Regular Giving Envelopes - Security Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If anybody brings their regular giving envelopes to the church when attending for private prayer they should only do so if there is a

	<p>means of securely leaving the envelopes (eg: a locked box) in order to reduce the risk of theft.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If envelopes are received it would be prudent to allow time to elapse before they are handled and opened. Consideration needs also to be given to being able to secure the envelopes during this time. • Practical information can be found here: https://www.parishresources.org.uk/re-opening-churches-and-safe-giving/
<p>07</p>	<p><u>GASDS (Gift Aid Small Donations) – temporary changes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lockdown is presenting particular challenges for this scheme and many of you have contacted the office about this. • HMRC guidance states: <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><i>“During the COVID 19 crisis HMRC would accept separate weekly envelopes containing £30 or less given when the Churches re open as eligible for GASDs. Alternatively, one envelope with a declaration which clearly states how much was being donated each week would also be eligible. For example: If a donor sends (say) £40 “to cover the next four weeks” then this would be eligible as £10 per week provided it is made clear (date provided for the weeks covered) that it is four separate donations in the same envelope.”</i></p> • This can apply for any envelope donations received during lockdown as well. • Unfortunately, if these donations were given by cheque, Standing Order, BACS transfers, PayPal etc. they will not currently be claimable under GASDS. • It is essential that all planned giving envelopes are clearly marked as required by HMRC, and we suggest the full retention of these envelopes for the required six years. Audit trails should be maintained at all costs. • Planned giving envelopes given by those who have a current regular Gift Aid declaration are not affected and can be claimed in the usual way.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further information and advice is available from Sue Warren. Sue can be contacted on 0161 828 1424 or by emailing Susanwarren@manchester.anglican.org
08	<p><u>Parish Share Survey</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sincere thanks are expressed to all parishes who responded to the request to submit forecasts of estimated parish share based on: Churches becoming open for worship from September 2020 Churches becoming open for worship from January 2021• The information is invaluable in helping to form a clearer picture of the position in order to determine how the diocese responds.
09	<p><u>Vulnerable Parishes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is asked that parishes who are at financial risk during this time in particular at the point of not being able to pay key bills such as insurance and utilities are strongly urged to make contact via finance@manchester.anglican.org
10	<p><u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government announcements are currently being made on a frequent basis with very limited notice – things are moving extremely quickly at the moment.• Everyone continues to be encouraged to regularly access the diocesan website to access the latest advice and guidance about coronavirus https://www.manchester.anglican.org/coronavirus/ it is under constant review and updates are published as quickly as possible.

Informal Meeting of Diocesan Synod – Saturday 13th June 2020

Briefing Note

Background

This virtual meeting of Diocesan Synod was held via Zoom because of the coronavirus pandemic. This was an informal meeting as Synod's Standing Orders require members to be physically present in order to make decisions. It was considered important to convene Synod and provide the updates summarised below, given that the March Synod had been cancelled due to the pandemic.

Presidential Address – Bishop David

Bishop David confirmed his thanks, as set out in his recent Pentecost letter, for the part played by everyone in ensuring that coronavirus had not closed our churches – but had opened them up in different ways, with new skills being learned along with new ways of providing pastoral and spiritual support. He recognised also the challenges being faced by our communities.

Bishop David talked the pressures caused by the pandemic including financial pressures and how these were also being experienced by the Diocese as a whole. He reminded Synod that many of the churches in the Diocese - and therefore the Diocese itself - had been under growing financial strain even before the coronavirus crisis. The Diocese incurred an operating deficit of over £1million in 2019, because many of our churches were not able to meet their parish share commitments.

There has been a general understanding for a number of years, of the need to make major changes to ensure a vibrant future for our church in Manchester. Our current challenges are the same as those we have faced for many years but on a larger scale. This means we have no option but to make radical attempts to solve them. If we continue to operate the in the way we did before the current crisis, it's likely that our decline will accelerate.

We had already identified the need to reorganise local ministry in Manchester Diocese and to reduce clergy numbers to achieve a balanced budget. The current crisis means that we will have to move quickly than we had anticipated with these changes.

Bishop David has therefore asked Bishop's Leadership Team, with the close involvement of the Diocesan Secretary, to focus over the coming months on developing a set of proposals on the future shape of the Diocese – one that is missionally and financially sustainable – designed so we are able to invest in future growth and future vocations, as well as achieve a balanced budget.

A report on progress with this piece of work will be presented to Bishop's Council in July and shared more widely across the Diocese in the second half of 2020, as the basis for a strategy to be agreed through our governance processes.

The work on the future shape of the Diocese needs to take place ahead of any steps to implement changes to our deanery arrangements, following Bishop David's recent decision to amalgamate the current 20 deaneries in 7 and create the role of 7 full-time Area Deans. In his report explaining his decision, Bishop David concluded that the missional drivers behind the deanery proposals are, if anything, strengthened by the challenges we face as we emerge from the pandemic. Delaying a decision on the new deanery arrangements would have prolonged uncertainty and prevented us from tackling the really important issues that we need to address together.

Bishop's Leadership Team has also recently agreed that we will wait until the start of the new governance year – June 2021 – before moving fully and formally to the new deanery arrangements. This reflects the fact that there is uncertainty about the timing of APCMs and the deanery elections in the current year, and also the timing of the autumn General Synod which needs to meet to agree some of the changes.

Rather than moving to the new arrangements part-way through the year, we will continue with the current deanery arrangements for the whole of 2020/21 and for this to be a year of transition, so that as wide a group as possible can be involved in shaping the new strategy for the Diocese and also proposals at deanery level. This way, we can have certainty about the timetable and also make the most of the opportunity to fully engage all the key people – current lay chairs, area deans and the wider church community – as we move towards the formal implementation of the new deanery arrangements from June 2021.

We will need to be intentional, focused and supportive of each other, and have an agreed programme of work and prayer for the year ahead to help us achieve our vision for the Diocese – to be a transforming Christian presence at the heart of every community.

Bishop David also talked about the importance of Black Lives Matter to our Diocese and the need for us to continue to make changes so that our BAME communities are fully engaged and represented at all levels in the life of our church. He confirmed that he has set up a group, chaired by the Archdeacon of Manchester, to lead on how we engage with all the issues thrown up by the Black Lives Matter campaign; and that a well-attended Protest through Prayer event, led by Karen and colleagues, took place a few days prior to Synod.

Bishop David closed by expressing his confidence that from the experience of the last three months, we will be able to rise to our current and future challenges

and emerge stronger in our commitment to do all that God is asking of us in our Diocese.

Response to Covid 19

Archdeacon David Sharples explained that a Coronavirus Response Group- involving experienced clergy and supported by Alison Moore - had been set up at the beginning of March. Priority had been given to publishing advice on the website and also through the weekly cascade process. He reflected that going into lockdown had been more straightforward than coming out of lockdown which was proving to be a more gradual and less clear-cut process.

Alison Moore gave an update on recent changes regarding the lifting of restrictions on private prayer and funerals.

Synod enthusiastically supported a vote of thanks to Alison for her excellent advice and support to colleagues across the Diocese during the pandemic.

Financial Update

Phillip Blinkhorn, DBF Chair, provided an update on the Diocese's finances.

Phillip explained that in May parishes had been asked to forecast their Parish Share payments for 2020, based on two scenarios: opening in September 2020, and opening in January 2021. So far 84% of parishes had responded, and he thanked parishes for this excellent response.

The responses indicate an overall reduction of £1.5m in Parish Share compared with 2019, on the assumption that churches open again in September 2020. On this basis, our financial forecast for the current year is for an overall operating deficit of £2.6m, and a further deficit of £1.5m in 2021. Clearly the Diocese will not be able to sustain deficits of this order for the long term.

The Diocese is currently exploring the option of taking out short-term loans to cover the deficit, while we take action to achieve a balanced budget. We also have the option of using the proceeds from the sale of surplus parsonages to fund the deficit, although the preference is for this money to be reinvested to provide income for the future.

Our latest financial projections show that our agreed plan to reduce from the current number of c.200 to 175 stipendiary posts by 2022 is unaffordable. Focusing on ministry costs is therefore a high priority for the foreseeable future. This also raises questions about where we apply the £2m+ subsidy we receive from national church for lower income communities. It is likely that in the future this subsidy will need to be more targeted than it is now to ensure that the churches in our most vulnerable communities continue to be supported.

13/6/20



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OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Manchester

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