

The Bishop of Carlisle
The Right Reverend James Newcome
Bishop's House, Ambleside Road,
Keswick CA12 4DD

21 January 2021

Dear Colleague

Latest COVID Guidance & Diocesan Restructure

I pray this finds you well, if not a little wearied by the continuing difficulties and challenges thrown up by the COVID pandemic. Bishop Emma and I continue to make calls to clergy across the Diocese and, understandably, many colleagues are reporting a dip in spirits. Be assured of our continued prayers and support for you and your faithful outworking of ministry.

Everyone's physical and mental wellbeing is of paramount concern and so may I again point you to the various resources and support hubs which may be of help; the details can be found at <https://www.carlisediocese.org.uk/clergy/wellbeing/>.

As we approach Lent, Holy Week and Easter, so the national church has just published new [helpful guidance](#) for services at this time. Advice and guidance is issued on the following issues:

- Can we use ash on Ash Wednesday?
- Can small groups meet, and can talks be given that are not part of public worship?
- Can the Stations of the Cross be used?
- Can devotional performances or recitals of music, poetry or dance be held in person?
- Can palm crosses be distributed?
- Can the Passion Narrative be said or sung during worship in person?
- May outdoor services / processions / walks of witness be held?
- Can the 'Chrism Mass' / Distribution of Oils / Renewal of Commitment to Ministry happen this year?
- Can footwashing and the 'Watch' (for instance on Maundy Thursday) take place?
- Is the Three Hours' Devotion 'communal worship'?
- Can ministers or others prostrate or kneel?
- Can we venerate the Cross?
- Can ministers distribute previously consecrated bread (i.e. on Good Friday)?
- Can part or all of the Easter Vigil or a Dawn Service (or any other service) take place outside?
- Can the new fire be kindled? May candles be used?
- Can the Easter Candle be marked / carried around?
- Can the Exsultet (the Easter Song of Praise) be sung?
- May Easter gardens / flowers be arranged?

May I commend this document to you and ask that you read it carefully.

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May I also point you to the attached document from Bishop Emma which highlights special Lent resources she will be sharing with you (hopefully from the week commencing 8 February) and which are based around the God for All refreshed vision's four key themes: follow daily, care deeply, speak boldly, tread gently. The document includes helpful details and timelines for the use of the resources. I do hope you are able to draw on those over the suggested five weeks.

Of course, the pandemic has affected our churches in so many different ways, not least financially. We expect the financial impact to continue into 2021. You may recall that a Financial Planning Task Group was set up last year which tabled recommendations for the 2021 draft budget.

That budget - subsequently approved by Diocesan Synod - identified that savings would have to be made in the central support teams based in Church House, including reductions in staffing. As a result much of the Church House and DBF operation has been the subject of a restructure process and formal consultation resulting in significantly lower costs. That restructure – which has understandably been difficult for all concerned – is now drawing to a close. May I point you to an attached briefing document from Diocesan Secretary Derek Hurton and Bishop Emma about the restructure and also to a chart which provides further details on the reorganisation. Contact details have also been updated on the Diocesan website to reflect the restructure - <https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/contact-us/>.

I would ask that you hold in your prayers everyone who has been through this process and, especially, those colleagues who will not be with us as we move forwards.

Finally, please be assured of my continued prayers for you and yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned at the end of the letter.