

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

18 May 2021

To All Clergy and Chaplains

Dear Colleague,

1. Latest Covid Restrictions and Marriage Registration Resources

I hope and pray this latest briefing finds you well. You may recall that a briefing document which I sent to you on 6 May made reference to changes which would come into force from 17 May, as the Government continues to follow its roadmap for the easing of restrictions.

As a result, late yesterday a number of documents were updated on the [Church of England's coronavirus website page](#). May I take this opportunity to point you to them and ask that you take time to read through the various updates. Whilst onerous, you will appreciate, I'm sure, the need to continue to keep updated on the latest guidance.

The updated/reviewed documents are:

- [Weddings](#) – As we are now at step 3 of the four step roadmap, up to 30 people may attend weddings (subject to the church building still being Covid-compliant).
- [Baptisms](#) – This document has been reviewed following step 3, but no edits have been required (baptisms can take place as part of communal worship but Covid security must be maintained for the building; baptisms as a private ceremony allow for up to 30 people to attend, again maintaining Covid-security).
- [Funerals](#) - Government guidance permits as many people to attend church premises for a funeral as the Covid secure capacity of the building allows. This is subject to the church carrying out a risk assessment and taking all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of coronavirus. See more detail in the [COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic](#).
- [Individual private prayer](#) – This document has been reviewed following step 3, but no edits have been required.
- [Permitted Activities under national 'step' regulations](#) - This document replaces the document called COVID-19 Permitted Activities under national 'Step' Regulations which was issued on 25 March 2021. The document summarises the principal changes from Step 2 which are:
 - People can now attend public worship in church as part of a group of 6 (as well as alone or as part of a household group).
 - Outdoor public worship can take place without any total cap on numbers as long as people stay within groups of not more than 30.
 - Weddings can now be attended by up to 30 people.
 - Funerals no longer have a specific cap on numbers (but there is guidance on capacity and keeping churches COVID-secure that needs to be taken into account).
 - Up to 30 people can attend support groups and parent and child groups (with children under 5 not being counted).
 - Concerts and plays and heritage visiting can resume in churches (subject to requirements and guidance on keeping venues COVID-secure).

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- [Conducting public worship](#)

The national coronavirus website page also includes an updated FAQ:

- *Is singing permitted?* Government guidance states that singing should follow the [principles of safer singing](#) and the principles set out in the [performing arts guidance](#). In particular:
 - Where music plays a big part in worship, and recordings are available, these should be considered as an alternative to live singing or performing.
 - Any instrument played during worship should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.
 - Any performers should be positioned in a way that avoids face-to-face performance, as far as possible.
 - Limit the duration of any singing, as far as possible.
 - Do what you can to improve ventilation to ensure plenty of fresh air whenever possible, including opening windows.
 - Always ensuring there is a gap of at least 2m between any performers and the first row of worshippers. Further mitigations like screens or other barriers between the performers and worshipper may also be considered.
 - If worship takes place inside, the congregation should not participate in any activity that can create aerosols, including communal singing, shouting and chanting.

Indoors

- A group of up to 6 amateur singers can perform, or rehearse for performance with physical distancing being maintained at all times. There is no limit on the number of professional singers but they should follow guidance on [performing arts](#). Children's choirs can also perform, whether from one school or more than one, following Government advice for [out of school settings](#) on group sizes and infection protection and control for example. Where possible during worship the singers should be at the front of the church while the rest of the congregation remain seated. Communal singing, by the congregation, should not take place and strict physical distancing should be observed.

Outdoors

- When communal worship takes place in the grounds or the outside space of a place of worship, the congregation may join in with singing in multiple groups, each consisting of up to 30 people, following the principles set out in the [performing arts guidance](#). This includes ensuring that congregation members follow physical distancing rules.
- The Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) has produced more detailed resources on singing and music, which can be found [here](#).

As ever, all of the above has to be read in line with necessary risk assessments having been completed. Once again I attach the Parish Risk Assessment Template, should you need it.

2. On a separate note, I appreciate that you will also have been dealing with changes to the marriage registration process as from 4 May. May I point you to helpful resources for clergy on this matter which have been uploaded to the Diocesan website and can be found on the [Clergy page](#) under the heading Marriage Registration. The documents include:

- [New process for registering marriages](#)
- [Guidebook for the clergy \(April 2021\)](#)
- [New marriage registration - FAQs](#)
- [New marriage registration links](#)
- [Weddings Flowchart](#)
- [Marriage booking form](#)
- [Marriage booking form - alternative version](#)

The main point for information for clergy on this matter is the [Church Support Hub](#).

3. May I also take this opportunity to remind you of an opportunity to meet (by Zoom) this evening with the Dean of the new Theological College (Emmanuel) for our NW region, Michael Leyden (who was formerly Principal of St Mellitus North West) and who will be available for questions and conversation. You can book in by emailing Julie Langtree julie.langtree@allsaintscentre.org and use the zoom link below on:

Time: May 18, 2021 07:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/98020476545?pwd=MXYYyZGw2SXZndTZWVUFkT3pHZkJ5Zz09>

Meeting ID: 980 2047 6545 / Passcode: 695895

or on the alternative date:

Time: Jun 10, 2021 03:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/91361301342?pwd=eUJhY1BBdHhmd2NSeWJBR255UnAwUT09>

Meeting ID: 913 6130 1342 / Passcode: 655779

This comes with my very best wishes, and thanks for persevering to the end of this briefing!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James".

James Newcome
Bishop of Carlisle