

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

20 July 2021

To: All clergy/chaplains

Dear colleague,

Latest Covid Guidance

As promised, may I signpost you to newly-published guidance which has been posted on the Church of England's coronavirus website page.

The guidance - [Opening and managing church buildings in step 4 of the Roadmap out of Lockdown](#) – has been released to coincide with the Government's move to Step 4 of its roadmap as of 19 July. **Please be aware the contents of this document will evolve as further guidance is published by Government and other bodies that link with our life as a Church.** I shall keep you updated in this regard.

Though the document runs to 12 pages my strong advice would be to carefully read and consider the guidance given. It touches on matters such as:

- Face masks and social distancing – “Although social distancing measures and face coverings are no longer required by law, the incumbent may still make decisions to retain some or all of these measures if they believe doing so is important for safety in their building, or if they judge that it will help people to feel more secure in returning to worship and other uses of the building.”
- Singing – “From 19 July singing and musical performances of all kinds are allowed in churches, including congregational singing, and choirs and worship groups can perform without legal limitations. However, some activities can also increase the risk of catching or passing on coronavirus. This happens where people are doing activities which generate more particles as they breathe heavily, such as singing or raising their voices. The risk is greatest where these activities take place when people are in close contact with others indoors, particularly in poorly ventilated spaces. In these situations where there is a higher risk of catching or passing on the virus, we advise additional precautions should be considered.”
- Risk assessments – “It is important that the person acting as the ‘venue manager’ carry out a risk assessment. This is part of keeping yourself, volunteers, staff, and visitors safe. You can use the template and guidance provided in the government's [Events and Attractions guidance](#), or you can use the Church of England's own template (as attached to this email), whichever works best for your context. You can also create your own assessment or re-use a previous template so long as you ensure the assessment is up to date and regularly reviewed.”
- Holy Communion – “The common cup may now be shared, but the Bishops wish to make clear that, given continued potential risks to health, it remains permissible for the president to be the only person who receives Holy Communion in the form of

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wine. Whilst variations in forms of service are at the discretion of the minister who is to conduct the service, it is recommended that a consistent policy is worked out in a parish and carefully communicated.”

- Life Events – “The lifting of legislation means that the numbers at these events are not mandated by law but potentially by the pre-pandemic capacity of the building. However, there is an expectation by Government that people act responsibly in indoor spaces, particularly where large numbers of people are involved. Where an incumbent feels a life event service will have additional risk because of the numbers of people involved they can ask the party to comply with additional measures such as face coverings and limited numbers for the safety of all those attending. A risk assessment for the service may help to identify what additional measures would be most helpful and provide a clear rationale for decisions taken.”

With the above in mind, may I suggest that you look to liaise with your PCCs at the earliest opportunity in order that you can agree what policies should be adopted. I understand that for many clergy it may prove difficult to convene a PCC meeting at this time, but I would advise there is communication with PCC members to establish what protocol should be locally, particularly with the worrying increase in transmission rates.

I also understand the very difficult situation that clergy may face around Life Events services, particularly if there is an unwillingness amongst some in the congregation to abide by face mask wearing and social distancing requests. Your safety will always be of paramount concern to me, and you should feel empowered to have such conversations, whilst also understanding it is now an individual’s right to refuse to co-operate if they so wish.

This final leg of the roadmap was never going to be easy and has been made even more difficult with the rising case numbers we are currently seeing. It is within that context that I would suggest caution and respect for those who are anxious about this further lifting need to be uppermost in all of our minds.

Please be assured of my continued prayers for you and your ministry at this time.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.