



**AD CLERUM Update 16**  
**30<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

Dear Colleagues,

*‘How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God  
and this is the gateway of heaven.’ (Genesis 28.17)*

The Government has announced that, from this weekend, our church buildings can once again open for public worship. This is wonderful news. It means that in parallel with the hospitality industry, we can demonstrate the welcome and hospitality of God to all people. We have been making preparations how to re-open our buildings safely for some time now. It will not be appropriate for all to hold regular services immediately, but we are rising to the challenge of how to be Church post lockdown.

The Government did not issue its Guidance until early on Monday morning. It is based on the latest public health advice but is generic, framed for all places of worship and all faiths. As you will see from the attachment the House of Bishops has carefully translated this generic Guidance into a Christian context, setting out the practicalities of opening our buildings safely and the implications for the conduct of worship. The Guidance covers things like social distancing, hand-sanitisers, Bibles, orders of service and, where appropriate, organising a one-way traffic system inside a church building. Updated versions of the existing advice on Holy Communion, Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals and Confirmations will be made available on the national website in the next few days. I encourage you to check them out by following this link: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

As you plan this Sunday’s worship, and perhaps celebrate the Eucharist together for the first time in months, you may wish to draw upon the liturgical resources circulated last month: ‘Opening the doors: re-entering our church buildings’. To access these resources, please follow this link:

[Re-entering church buildings](#)

If you are responsible for more than one church building, you may decide to open one or more for worship, some only for private prayer and/or weddings and funerals, but not the rest – at least not for the time being. We recommend that mission communities with more than one church building make these decisions on a mission community basis, including how to sustain on-line worship. As we re-open our church doors, let’s not shut our virtual doors.

The Archdeacons will be holding a second webinar on the new Guidance for clergy and will endeavour to respond to any questions you may have on Friday at 2pm.

We should not be naïve. The coronavirus hasn't gone away. Following the first wave of infection, we are now in Stage Two of 'co-existence with the virus'. Health professionals tell us that until the coronavirus is either eradicated or neutralised through the rollout of an effective programme of vaccination, this phase could last for as much as five years.

The Government has moved away from legislation and is now just issuing guidance. That does not mean it is less significant, but rather that each of us now has to make our own decisions and risk assessments. The same applies to us as church leaders in the responsibility we exercise for our congregations and buildings. And if we are to make wise decisions, then we need to be rested. I am conscious that many of you are drained and the prospect of negotiating this next step of the journey is hugely stressful. So please take every opportunity to stop, to rest and to put your feet up.

### **Music and Singing**

A national working group has been set up to examine the evidence for the possible transmission of the virus when singing, and until it has reported and the Government issued Guidance on the subject, it will not be possible to sanction singing other than by a single cantor appropriately socially distanced. The good news is that a range of hymns, songs and choral pieces have been made available to churches free of charge thanks to a national partnership between St Martin-in-the-Fields and the RCSM. In just seven weeks, there have been nearly 50,000 downloads through the Resource Hub <https://achurchnearyou.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360018780734-The-Resource-Hub>

### **NHS Anniversary: 5 July 1948**

This weekend sees the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the National Health Service. During post-war reconstruction, improving the healthcare of the nation became crucial to the nation's recovery. Beveridge, the architect of the NHS, identified 'five giants' that had to be slain: want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness. The cataclysm of war provided the stimulus for reform and renewal. It was a momentous achievement.

During the coronavirus pandemic, there has been immense support for the NHS and its front line workers. The emergence of 'Clap for Carers' on Thursday evenings was a significant experience in the lockdown. Thanksgiving binds communities together, turning 'I' into 'we'. The contribution of carers and key workers who have given of themselves sacrificially needs to be honoured. Sharing stories of people and events during the lockdown is likely to form the kernel of any community celebration. As our church buildings re-open for worship this Sunday, please don't miss a golden opportunity to applaud the unsung heroes of your local community.

Liturgical resources for the NHS anniversary are attached with this *Ad clerum*. They may also be found by following this link:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers/prayers-anniversary-nhs>

Bishop Jackie is leading a special Diocesan service of thanksgiving, featuring NHS staff and chaplains this Sunday. It includes a reflection of a 94 year old former surgeon, who qualified as a doctor in 1943, about his experience of the early days of the NHS. The service goes live at 10am and may be viewed by following this link:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV2YkZIOMKaNRd9sjzLmV7Q?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV2YkZIOMKaNRd9sjzLmV7Q?view_as=subscriber)

## **Building Stronger Connections**

Over the last four months, our resilience has been tested in all sorts of ways. The crisis has shown how important good and accurate communication is. We need to build stronger connections at every level across the Diocese. We have decided, therefore, to embark upon a Communications and Engagement Survey and need you to tell us how we can communicate with you better. We need to build a picture of how effective online church services are and how much of a reach social media, parish magazines, videos and podcasts are having in Devon. In due course, the Communications Team will share the survey's findings with you which we hope will be useful in helping your church go forward. The survey is open until 19<sup>th</sup> July and, as a thank you, all completed responses will be entered into a draw to win a voucher! Please fill in the survey by clicking on this link:

<https://www.research.net/r/DOEBuildingstrongconnections>

The Comms Team would be grateful if you would include the survey link and information in your own church mailings or on your church website. We need as many people as possible to take part so that we get an accurate picture. A logo is attached to this *Ad Clerum* for you to use.

## **In returning and rest...**

If you were not able to take all your holiday entitlement because of the lockdown, you are able to roll it over to next year, if you so wish. We all need to rest. We all need a holiday. Words of the prophet Isaiah have always spoken to me: 'The Lord God, the Holy One of Israel says this: In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength' (Isaiah 30.15).

Whatever our age or circumstances, God invites us to forge a pattern of living in which work and creativity are complemented by rest and renewal. The point is not that if we are rested we will be more efficient and effective. The justification of rest and leisure is not that we should function faultlessly without having a nervous breakdown, but that we should continue to be a human being. The Christian faith says more: we become more ourselves, the more we rest in God.

With my thanks for our partnership in the Gospel,

+ Robert Exon