

To licensed clergy, those holding PtO and LLMs in the Diocese of Salisbury

1 July 2020

Dear sisters and brothers

### **Reopening for public worship**

You will all have seen the government's [Guidance for the safe use of places of worship from the 4 July](#) issued just after midnight on Monday morning together with [Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships](#). I don't think that either document held any surprises for us but, before writing to you again, I have waited to see what gloss the national Church would put on those government documents.

The national Church has now published [its guidance](#) last evening and I commend it to you. I am sorry that there is a lot to absorb but I don't think that it will make the task any easier if I try to set it out again in a letter. The main theme is to proceed with caution: risk assessment, strict social distancing, restrained liturgy and an emphasis on safety. You will have to conduct a fresh risk assessment to open for public worship (as opposed to for private prayer) and the national Church has issued a revised template that may be found either by following the hyperlink in the national Church's guidance or about half way down [the national Church's Coronavirus web page](#) under 'Documents/Resources'.

I underline again that no church has to open again for public worship this Sunday if its resources do not allow it to do so safely. As the Church in our communities, we have a duty to set a good example of a responsible approach to the easing of lockdown. I hope that we may continue to work together exchanging ideas and other resources on how we go about this. Do keep in touch with your archdeacons to let them know your plans. They will be repositories of others' experience which they will be able to share so that we may all benefit from each other's endeavours.

Some have enquired about outdoor worship. I think that a point to note here is that the guidance that will apply will depend upon whether the space to be used is public space, private space or part of the 'place of worship', the definition of which in the government guidance includes 'surrounding grounds, for example, adjoining car parks, courtyards or gardens for which the venue managers are also responsible'. I think that the first and second spaces will allow for only very small gatherings under current government general guidance while the last may, for some, present opportunities.

It is possible now to celebrate the eucharist again but in one kind only. Canon law militates against the use of individual cups and, in any event, our Anglican theology encourages the use of 'one cup'. If you do celebrate the eucharist, great care will be needed.

The guidance advises against singing at the moment but, as you may have seen on [the national television news](#), our own cathedral choir has been engaged in helping Porton Down to reach a conclusion on the safety of singing.

Do please keep looking at the diocesan website's [Coronavirus page](#) where the latest guidance is posted. The guidance is updated from time to time but you will not want to hear from me every time that it is.

## South Sudan and Sudan

Our own problems with Covid-19 in this country are significant but our brothers and sisters in South Sudan and Sudan face even greater problems with even less resources. Their 'normal' includes hunger and the threat of disease against a background of violence despite the many efforts to bring about peace. Covid-19 has added another frightening aspect to the people's lives. In the South Sudan the need is for improved hygiene and continued support for reconciliation. In the Sudan the most pressing need is for food, because of the collapsing economy there: 'They would rather die of Covid-19 than hunger' is the distressing report from Archbishop Ezekiel Kondo in Khartoum.

We were looking forward to welcoming some of our partners in the week before the Lambeth Conference which would have been at the end of July. The partnership between this diocese and what are now two Provinces of South Sudan and Sudan has been long and is deep.

In the Autumn we will have to address our own financial needs but for now, to keep us alert to the needs of the wider world, I am launching a diocesan appeal to run through July for us to help our brothers and sisters in the Sudans. Please aim high. I have in mind a target of £50,000 but would love to exceed it.

The appeal is for SOAP and FOOD, soap being everything linked to improved hygiene which is just as important as food in fighting Covid-19. I hope and pray we will be generous and ask you to give it as much encouragement as you are able. The link to the Just Giving page is <https://bit.ly/sudansemergency>. It will be updated by the weekend with extra material but is ready now to receive donations.

I often use this prayer which I think was first used by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston:

God bless Africa  
Guard her children  
Guide her leaders  
Give her peace

### **And finally**

Many of us are finding this experience very tiring and burdensome. It is easing as we begin to see people and meet in small groups outside face to face. I am sure there will be joy for those able to be in church for worship but how we do this is not easy. The Gospel this Sunday speaks to my and our condition: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Mt 11.28) Being yoked with Christ and one another lightens the load. So take care of yourself physically and spiritually. If you can't go away, take proper time off and keep a pattern to the days and weeks. I encourage you to pray continually but not to work continuously!

Thanks for all and God bless,

**+Nicholas Sarum**