

Dear All,

You may be aware that during this period of national lockdown, communal worship remains one of the permitted activities. However, with the cases rising rapidly in Cambridge and the increasing presence of the new, more transmissible variant of COVID-19, we must consider what is the best course of action.

The Bishops of Ely and Huntingdon have recently written a letter to all in the diocese urging us to consider not only what is permissible under government guidelines but also the local factors that should be taken into account when in-person services are considered.

From the Bishops' letter to all clergy (licensed and PTO), LLMs, churchwardens, PCC secretaries, Bishop Woodford House Staff and members of the Bishop's Council on behalf of the Bishops' of Ely and Huntingdon (available to read on the diocesan website <https://www.elydiocese.org/about/news-jobs-and-events/news-and-announcements/news/covid-19-lockdown--bishops-letter.php>):

*'Communal worship in church is permissible but may not be advisable – factors to consider, in addition to the much higher infectiousness of the new strain, include,*

- 1. Local infection rates*
- 2. The suitability of the church building for worship with Covid restrictions*
- 3. The vulnerability of the church congregation/ministers*

*Ceasing public worship in church is both permissible and, where that local decision is made by incumbent and PCC, entirely supported by us.'*

After much soul searching, the ministry team has agreed the following plans for each of the churches in our parish.

St Augustine's: Due to the reduced capacity of the building and the multigenerational nature of the congregation, all services at St Augustine's will be provided via Zoom until it is considered safe to resume hybrid services.

St Giles': Sunday services will be zoomed from the church, although we are not encouraging anyone to attend, a small number may attend as they wish. Additional safety measures will be taken, including extended distancing thus reducing the numbers who can attend safely. The presiding minister will wear a face shield as well as a mask. If you are planning to attend in person please inform Sheila before the service.

The church will not be open for casual visitors during the week, since in lockdown, the message is very clearly to stay at home.

St Luke's: Sunday services will be zoomed from the church or Philipa's house, (1st and 4th Sundays zoom only, 2nd and 3rd hybrid physical/zoom) although we are not encouraging anyone to attend, a small number may attend as they wish. Additional safety measures will be taken, including extended distancing thus reducing the numbers who can attend safely. The presiding minister will wear a face shield as well as a mask. If you are planning to attend in person please inform Sheila before the service.

Each of us would pray for our worship to be other than we have at present and we long for the day when we can celebrate the Eucharist together as a community, reflecting the freedom which is ours in Christ. Whether we are at home or in church, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are the source of our hope and the light of our lives. This hope can never be revoked nor its light limited, and we remain together, part of the body of Christ in the world.

Please be assured of our constant prayers for you all during this latest period of lockdown as we look forward to the life of the world to come.

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