



1 Hill Top
Coventry
CV1 5AB

Tel: 024 7652 1200
Fax: 024 7652 1330

The Venerable Sue Field

Archdeacon Pastor

Sue.Field@covcofe.org

Direct Line No. 024 7652 1337

By E-mail only

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To all licensed Clergy, Readers and Churchwardens

Dear all,

You will, I am sure, have picked up from the media over the weekend that the Government is likely to announce this week that church buildings and other places of worship can open for individual private prayer from Monday 15 June.

The Bishop of London who chairs the Recovery group has made this statement in response to that news:-

"This is the start of the journey for church buildings to open up safely in line with Government advice and we look forward to their detailed guidance on enabling this first step to happen.

Advice has already been circulated to all our dioceses to enable local churches to plan ahead for opening up for individual prayer. Our advice recognises that a particular local church may or may not be able to open at the same time as others and collaborative working between local churches is encouraged. A simple risk assessment template has been provided.

Throughout this crisis churches have been serving their communities in a range of practical ways but this announcement recognises that the buildings themselves are important sacred spaces for people. We also remember all at this time who mourn the loss of a loved one who died during the crisis and recognise that this is a fragile time in the prevention of the spread of this virus.

We look forward to when it is safe for our church buildings once again to become meeting places for worship, prayer and all they do to serve and bless their communities."

I wanted to write to you to highlight a few things about this important announcement.

1. Church buildings can open from 15 June but there is no urgency to open on 15 June and indeed buildings should not open if necessary preparatory steps have not been taken.

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2. Not all church buildings will be able to open. I have asked Area Deans to talk with churches in their Deanery so that the collaborative working that the Bishop of London mentions can be put in place to enable some church buildings to be open whilst others remain closed.
3. Currently, it appears that, when church buildings are open, they need to be supervised and therefore it may only be possible to open at limited times when supervision is possible.
4. The government advice for those over the age of 70 remains that they should minimise contact with others and therefore it is not appropriate to use people in that age bracket to be supervising buildings.

I am aware that some churches have already been giving some thought as to how they can open safely but it is essential that a risk assessment is carried out before you open – a template can be found on the Church of England website (link below) in the section about Coronavirus along with other documents about hygiene and reopening the building. You will need to consider such things as how people can remain 2 metres apart not only in the building but also as they enter and exit, whether you have hand sanitiser available or other means of handwashing, how you are going to ensure that the building is clean, ensuring that things people could touch such as Bibles, hymnbooks, leaflets are removed etc. For larger buildings, you may want to consider only having part of the building open so that you can monitor how it is used and also make it easier to clean. These and other considerations can be found in the documents on the website. Please do read these thoroughly.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

Please be aware that this website is regularly updated as new Government and Church of England advice changes. The updates are always listed at the top of the page and the documents are at the bottom of the page.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Area Dean or myself.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



The Venerable Sue Field
Archdeacon Pastor
Diocese of Coventry