



1 Hill Top  
Coventry  
CV1 5AB

Tel: 024 7652 1200  
Fax: 024 7652 1330

**The Venerable Sue Field**

**Archdeacon Pastor**

[Sue.Field@covcofe.org](mailto:Sue.Field@covcofe.org)

Direct Line No. 024 7652 1337

**By E-mail only**

12 June 2020

To all Licensed Clergy, Readers and Churchwardens

Dear colleagues

I wrote to you earlier this week after we learned that the Government was likely to allow church buildings to open. Since then, the changes have come thick and fast and I wanted to write round with some updates. Please do feel free to share this letter with others who need this information.

I do hope you have managed to keep on board with information on the Church of England Coronavirus page. Graeme Pringle signposts in the daily [Latest Update page](#) when there is new information on that website but please do keep an eye on both. The Recovery Group, chaired by the Bishop of London, has been working on a number of documents in preparation for lockdown easing. Many of those are planning documents in anticipation of restrictions being eased but once those restrictions are eased, the documents are revised in line with Government guidance, to give advice to us. This means, therefore, that documents are amended but changes are highlighted at the top of the page and, within the document, the date and version number are included.

**The two changes this week are that church buildings are allowed to open for private individual prayer from tomorrow (Saturday) and for small funeral services from Monday. The emphasis remains though, that these changes give permission but are not prescriptive and if Incumbents with their PCCs feel that they cannot open buildings safely, there is no requirement to do so.**

#### Opening for Individual Prayer

I wrote about this in my previous letter but, since then, further documents in connection with this have appeared or been amended on the Church of England website. These include a revised Risk Assessment template. Please do not open your building without completing that risk assessment and please ensure that you have followed the steps detailed in the document about maintaining hygiene.

The Government also changed the date at which this could happen from Monday 15 June to Saturday 13 June.

A document detailing government guidance on this can be found at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic>

The Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance is a company limited by guarantee,  
registered in England, No. 319482, and also a registered charity No. 247828.



The Diocese of Coventry is part of the Church of England



I have been made aware that the Life Events Church Support Hub has various resources available which include notices for church doors with QR codes to take people to prayers that they might like to use in church. It might also be good to put a notice on your door if you are not intending to open, maybe pointing people to a church that is open.

<https://churchsupporthub.org/life-events/downloads/>

The Cathedral ruins will be open from Monday and it is hoped the new Cathedral will be open from 22 June.

**Please remember that there is no pressure to open on Saturday, Monday or beyond if you are not able to do so safely. Schools, shops etc are not all opening on the days on which they are allowed to.**

There has been some discussion and confusion over the need for supervision of the building. The Government does not mention any requirement for this but we await Church of England clarification. It may be that it is not wise to leave the building unattended and I imagine that many buildings will only be open at limited times depending on your context and ability to do so safely.

**It is likely there will be further advice from the Church of England later today (Friday) as the Recovery group met yesterday and is meeting again this morning.**

#### Funerals

On Tuesday, the House of Bishops agreed that church buildings can reopen for funerals from Monday 15 June – the Government had never prohibited this: this was a decision by the Bishops.

Again, this gives permission rather than being prescriptive and depends on whether you can open safely, following hygiene requirements and having completed a risk assessment. Please note the following:-

1. Please read the specific guidance document on funerals on the Church of England website and note the section on attendance numbers in particular. It is really important that you don't have more people in the building than you can manage. In particular, you need to be able to maintain social distancing as people sit and stand in their places and also as they enter and exit.
2. You will clearly need a conversation with the Funeral Directors about the number your building can accommodate which will be different from other churches. You will also need to discuss with them how you manage the entry and exit of the procession and mourners.
3. Fees – you will know that the Diocesan Board of Finance waived its portion of the fees during the crisis but we are in discussion about when we will begin to charge those fees. I will let you know as soon as I know and with sufficient notice. I will also write to the Funeral Directors at the same time with any changes. For the moment though, we are not charging the DBF portion of the fees.

#### Those over the age of 70

The Government guidance reached through the above link, still advises those over 70 to minimize contact outside the home. It still remains the case that those in that age group are not permitted to take funerals and we strongly advise that people in that age group are not used to 'staff' church buildings as they open.

I appreciate that this is really hard for those over 70 who are fit and healthy but we do need to abide by government guidance as age is still a major risk factor with this disease. One of the task groups in the Church of England is working on this issue and will, in due course, produce some guidelines and a risk assessment but we are not there yet.

Last but not least, thank you so much for all you are doing in these difficult and testing times. No one is finding it easy and coming out of lockdown is far more complex than going in.

Please do feel free always to contact your Area Dean or me if you have any questions or need any support. We will do our best to help.

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Field".

**The Venerable Sue Field  
Archdeacon Pastor  
Diocese of Coventry**