



Wednesday 6th May 2020

**A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PAUL TO ALL CLERGY, LICENSED LAY
MINISTERS AND CHURCH OFFICERS**

Dear Friends,

Following a meeting of the House of Bishops yesterday, the Church of England has communicated the following update concerning a suggested 3-phase approach to revising access to church buildings: -

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/house-bishops-backs-phased-approach-revising-access-church-buildings>

The Bishops agreed that the decision on the timing of when to implement this revised advice should be made by individual Diocesan Bishops, in light of local circumstances.

Having consulted senior colleagues, including Area Deans, I am advising that clergy make preparations to enter church buildings from next week, with streaming of services from church buildings where appropriate and possible from Sunday 17th May. This will permit us time to digest the Government information on the 'direction of travel' towards easing some restrictions which is due to be set out on Sunday, whilst also following the national Church of England guidance that will be updated over the next few days. On this and other matters, please continue therefore to look out for the regular diocesan email communication update from Archdeacon Phil Williams.

We want to ensure that appropriate, comprehensive and thoughtful guidance can be provided to assist clergy and church officers over the next weeks as we move through various phases of returning to church buildings. For now, please be clear that church buildings remain closed. Some clergy will conclude they can continue to offer ministry most effectively from home, including online resources and services, whilst others will be pleased next week to enter church buildings for private prayer and to stream services from our buildings, closely following national guidance. If you have particular questions or concerns relating to this, please do be in touch with Archdeacon Phil; I am especially mindful of those who for special reasons need to continue to observe self-isolation.

As you will appreciate, even as we consider a phased return to accessing our church buildings, the pandemic crisis continues to present long term challenges and it will be some considerable time before all restrictions are lifted and life reaches a point of normality. In the meantime, we look to the Lord to guide us each day and to shape the mission of his church in new ways as we will fulfil our calling to the glory of God and cure of souls in our care.

May I take this opportunity to thank you once again for all the ways in which you have responded to the circumstances created by the COVID-19 virus. Please be assured of my continued prayers for you, your loved ones and your communities as we move tentatively into this next phase.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Paul". The signature is written in black ink and includes a small cross symbol to the left of the name. A horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.

The Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, The Rt Revd Paul Williams