



The Diocese of Southwark

The Venerable Simon Gates
Archdeacon of Lambeth

The Venerable Moira Astin
Archdeacon of Reigate

The Venerable John Kiddle
Archdeacon of Wandsworth

The Venerable Dr Jane Steen
Archdeacon of Southwark

The Venerable Dr Rosemarie Mallett
Archdeacon of Croydon

The Venerable Alastair Cutting
Archdeacon of Lewisham &
Greenwich

23rd December 2020

Tier 4, Advent and Christmas 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Thank you for all you are offering as you serve our Lord and his people at this difficult time.

We are writing after conversations with many of you about Tier 4 and its implications for churches. We realise that this decision will have impacted parish life and many of your carefully made plans for the coming days. You will have received the letter from Bishop Christopher and the CTG on Saturday evening and we trust that you were encouraged by that. We now offer some more practical information as well as our support for you in this situation.

This [poster](#) offers a useful summary of the current restrictions and the updated advice from the national church is [here](#). They are both attached to this circulation. Please check the online updated government guidance for the [safe use of places of worship here](#), the [guidance for small marriages here](#), and the general Government [guidance on Tier 4 here](#).

Communal worship is still permitted. Activities which are now **not allowed** include:

- church services or carol singing in a public outdoor space beyond the churchyard/church land
- physical meetings for PCC, APCM etc in church or church hall
- weddings with more than six present; anyone working is not included
- provision of youth services.

Research indicates that there has been almost no traceable transmission of COVID in places of worship in the UK. We know that you, your wardens and others, have taken great pains to ensure COVID-secure practice and the work you have done in risk assessing and implementing this has been outstanding. Whether or not you decide to continue worship in church now, we would like to congratulate you on the excellence of the provision you have made. Thank you.

If you continue worship in church, please update your statutory risk assessments; now is not the time to drop our COVID-guard. You may prefer to offer some or all services online. If you do so, please consider whether the church can be open for private prayer. It is right that you reflect local circumstances and the concerns you and other members of the ministry team or parish officers may have. In discerning the right way forward here, do consult the PCC. Keep your Archdeacon informed,

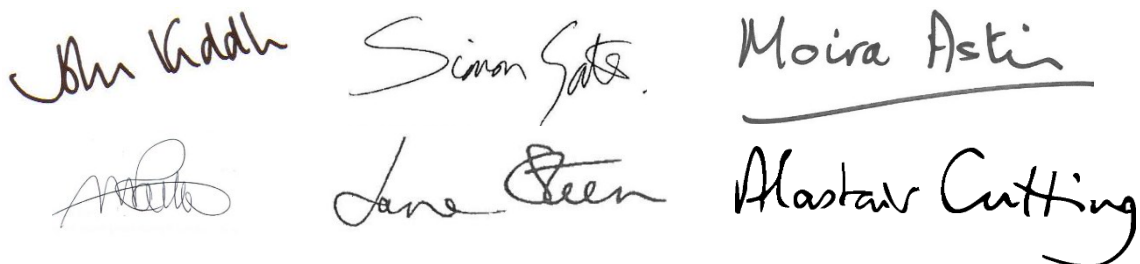
who will be very happy to talk the matter through with you if you wish. Please know that you have the support of your Bishops and Archdeacons as you make these decisions.

Online worship can be hard work and we are so grateful for the heroic efforts made by clergy and lay leaders to ensure that services have continued and the vulnerable been attended to. We are proud of your persistence and dedication. Please, look after yourselves and give yourselves time for rest and recreation after Christmas. The Archdeacons are offering services through Christmas/Epiphanytide, already appearing on the [Diocesan YouTube](#) channel; Daniel Stone has e-mailed information about these and will continue to do so and to include links so that video files can be downloaded. Do use these, and do not feel you have to limit yourself to doing so on one Sunday only.

Be assured that you, your families and church communities remain in our hearts and our prayers. Keep the faith, hope for what we do not yet see, and may this Christmas bring you and all those close to you renewed comfort and joy.

As we have written this, we have been very mindful of the Advent antiphon, “O Morning Star, splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness: come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death”. May the Lord indeed be with you as a dark year draws to a close.

With our thanks, and with our very warm wishes for a blessed and joyful Christmas despite everything,

The image shows six handwritten signatures in black ink, arranged in two rows of three. The top row contains the signatures of Alan Kidd, Simon Gate, and Moira Astin. The bottom row contains the signatures of an individual whose name is illegible, Jane Steen, and Alastair Cutting. The signature 'Moira Astin' is underlined.

The Archdeacons of the Diocese

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/946417/COVID-19_Tier_4_19_December_2020_.pdf

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/COVID%2019%20Permitted%20Activities%20under%20Tier%20System%2021.12.20%20v3.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-2-december>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-4-stay-at-home>