



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

23 July 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Many thanks for all the effort you have been putting in to preparing to open our churches for individual prayer, and for some gathered worship. We are very aware of the additional workload this is.

We have been asked a number of questions around the use of halls and churches as the lockdown restrictions are lifted bit by bit. Most of this follows on from previous guidance; and other groups using our churches and halls still have a responsibility to do their own risk assessments and make sure their insurance cover etc. is in place.

Can PCC and other meetings take place in church/church halls?

In “COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of multi-purpose community facilities” (20th July 2020) the Government continues to recommend that where meetings can take place digitally without the need for face to face contact, they continue to do so. If meetings need to take place physically and people can get into a building they can happen, but need 2m or 1m with mitigation to do so. Here is [this](#) advice in full in Section 3d . Please note that the spatial distancing required for the meeting may change the meeting dynamics as much as meeting digitally does.

3d: Meetings and civic functions

We continue to recommend that where meetings can take place digitally without the need for face-to-face contact, they should continue to do so. Where community facilities need to be used for physical meetings, these meetings should be managed within the social distancing guidance and principles set out above.

The principles set out in the ‘Safer workplaces’ guidance apply, including but not limited to:

- meetings of civic, political or community groups (e.g. parish council meeting, ward meeting of political party; charity board of trustees)
- MP or councillor surgery/drop-in sessions. The government is discouraging unnecessary physical attendance at meetings. Where necessary to take place physically, participants should maintain 2 metres (or 1 metre with risk mitigation) separation throughout
- public meetings and local consultations (e.g. planning)

If study groups/home groups cannot take place at home, may they use church premises for the meetings? Can church social groups and coffee mornings meet?

Government advice about meeting socially still focusses around interacting only with people in your bubble. It is possible for people to meet in a group context in a community space, but they should be encouraged to socially distance from anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble.

3c: Recreation, leisure and social gatherings

People meeting in a club or group context at a community centre should be encouraged to socially distance from anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble. In general, people are being advised to only:

- meet indoors in groups of up to 2 households
- meet outdoors in a group of no more than 2 households (including your support bubble) or in a group of up to 6 people from different households.

Can exercise and other groups use our church hall?

Clubs or groups that use community and church hall facilities can begin to meet again and facility managers should follow these [COVID-19 secure guidelines](#) to facilitate that.

3c: Recreation, leisure and social gatherings

From 25 July, indoor sporting facilities, fitness centres and dance studios will be open. For venues wishing to provide such activities, please follow this [guidance on sports and leisure facilities](#).

Can uniformed organisations use our church hall?

For the youth sector, as the current Covid-19 alert level is **Amber** (except in Leicester), the following activity is permitted, subject to a COVID-19 Action Plan and Risk Assessment, and cleaning regime being in place: Online and digital youth services; Detached local youth activities, including pre-planned outdoor activities; 1-2-1 indoor sessions with young people; Indoor group sessions (with small groups and distancing).

Different uniformed and other youth organisations are under national as well as their own organisational guidance about meeting. There is further information from our own diocesan CYP department [12 July leaflet](#) along with the [National Youth Agency](#), [Scouts](#), [Guides](#), etc.

Can different groups use the same halls?

Some groups may need exclusive use of the premises; others may be able to share premises, depending on local requirements.

Each group using the premises need to give the facility managers evidence of their own risk assessments, and have arranged appropriate cover with their insurance. An appropriate [cleaning regime](#) will need to be in place, with sufficient time allowed for cleaning to take place between use, or a 48hr period to elapse (or 72hrs, if there has been a recent diagnosed case of Covid-19). A Risk Assessment template for church buildings can be found [here](#).

Can independent churches meet in our premises again?

Other churches using either our churches or our halls may now come back to use as well, but will need to fulfil our CofE requirements for worship on premises. This will include completing (and sharing with the parish) a full risk register based on the CofE template ([this version 4 updated 1 July](#)), including agreeing an appropriate cleaning regime, and making the necessary arrangements with their insurers.

A reminder that the Framework for arrangements for other churches using our premises is on the [Diocesan website](#), and you can check with your Area ecumenical advisor for further details.

Helping people comply with the guidance


There may be situations where you find yourselves working with those finding it difficult to understand or to comply with the appropriate current spatial distancing measures. Where others (such as crematoria etc) are the site managers, they have responsibility for maintaining the guidelines are adhered to (though by some accounts, not all are doing this effectively.)

Where activities are within church and hall buildings, lay and clergy leaders will be the ones facing issues with compliance to the guidelines by congregation members and other visitors. Try to anticipate difficult situations and have other lay support to help manage more complicated issues, with an aim to reducing any heat in situations.

The archdeacons team had previously offered a series of services that could be used by parishes, to allow for some holiday time over July and August, and Daniel Stone's communications show where you can access those items to put in to your services, or to links to the successive live streams that will be broadcast.

May God grant you some peace over the coming weeks, and fill you with courage and hope as we then look towards the Autumn term and season.

With every blessing,



The Archdeacons of the Diocese.