

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with the advice on the Church of England website and the FAQs document from the Diocesan Registry.

As of Tuesday 24 March 2020, all church buildings are now closed. A full statement by the Archbishops can be read on the CofE and diocesan websites. As a church and as Christians concerned for the wellbeing of key workers and the most vulnerable, we are responding to the Government's call to ***stay at home, protect the NHS, and save lives.***

Frequently Asked Questions:

Can visitors enter churches for private prayer?

The government has asked everyone to remain at home unless it is necessary to go out for certain limited purposes. In keeping with this clear direction, churches are not open for private prayer.

Can clergy and other ministers pray privately in churches?

Clergy should follow the advice to stay at home, which means remaining at home to pray rather than doing so in a church building.

Can churches be used for the recording or live-streaming of services?

Churches should not be used for services. Ministers who are able to should record or live-stream services from their homes.

Can priests celebrate Holy Communion at home?

Yes. Bishop Tim has given permission for priests to celebrate Holy Communion at home, provided another communicant member of the household is present. These services can be recorded or live-streamed to enable others to join in prayer and using materials for spiritual communion.

What about the safety of church buildings?

Please follow government advice and stay at home. [Advice from EIG](#) suggests precautions which should be taken for the safety and security of church buildings, but that a weekly check on a church may be possible without making unnecessary trips out.

Can weddings still go ahead?

The government has said that weddings may not take place at the current time.

Can baptisms still go ahead?

The government has said that baptisms may not take place at the current time. Clergy are able to administer emergency baptisms in exceptional circumstances and with appropriate precautions.

Can funerals go ahead?

Funerals may only take place at the graveside or at a crematorium. Only the immediate family may attend (if allowed by the crematorium), which means: spouse, parents, children. The interment of ashes should be postponed until current restrictions are lifted.

What about APCMs?

The Bishop of Winchester has signed a direction allowing APCMs to be held no later than 31 October 2020. Current churchwardens, PCC members and deanery synod representatives will continue in their roles for an extended time. Details are available on the diocesan website.

What about foodbanks?

Churches have been asked to continue supporting essential services like food banks wherever

possible. Please encourage others to donate. Foodbanks will need to consider the appropriateness of their venue, and adjust their collection and distribution processes in accordance with government advice to ensure that the most urgent and necessary help is provided as safely as possible.

Can we deliver things to people in their homes?

Given the requirement that all non-essential workers stay at home, individuals should not be making deliveries to homes other than food or medicines to those who are vulnerable and are unable to leave home themselves. Churches wishing to organise this sort of activity should consider safeguarding implications as usual (see below), and be particularly aware of the risk of infection being transmitted if careful precautions are not taken. You may find that local charities engaged in these sorts of activities can provide guidance on good practice, or opportunities for volunteers to support necessary assistance.

What about safeguarding?

The diocesan safeguarding team continues to work as usual, taking appropriate precautions, and all concerns about harm or the risk of harm to a child or adult at risk should be referred to them as usual.

Do church officers and volunteers still need to do DBS checks and safeguarding training?

Yes, all activities involving work with children or adults at risk are subject to the usual safeguarding requirements. DBS checks must be carried out as usual, although there are new processes to facilitate the checking of identity documents remotely. Safeguarding training must be completed online where possible, but there is a relaxation of the requirement for safeguarding training which must be delivered face-to-face while social distancing restrictions are in place. Details of these changes are available on the safeguarding pages of the diocesan website.