

Dear Clergy, Lay Readers, Vestry Secretaries and Diocesan Secretaries

The First Minister has this afternoon announced some change to the levels in the Scottish Government's Strategic Framework in which Council Areas are placed. Whilst East Lothian and Midlothian are reduced from level 3 to level 2 from Tuesday next week (24 November), more significantly, 11 local authority areas are moved up to level 4 from Friday this week until 11 December. The areas moving into level 4 are: the City of Glasgow, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian.

There are particular implications for places of worship. In most areas, the current maximum number of people permitted to attend a service of public worship is 50. However in a level 4 area, that is reduced to just 20 – so that will affect church services in the areas concerned from this coming weekend. Also, whilst the normal rule is that people in a level 3 or level 4 area should not travel out of their own local authority area, or into a local authority area in level 3 or 4, there are exceptions so that a Minister of Religion or worship leader may cross boundaries to travel to their place of worship. For others wishing to attend worship, it is permissible to travel to their normal place of worship to or from a level 3 area but not level 4. Consequently, for example, someone living in a level 3 area may not travel to their normal place of worship if it is in a level 4 area and vice versa (unless they are a Minister of Religion or worship leader).

There are also more limited restrictions applicable to weddings taking place in a level 4 area, with the maximum number of attendees reduced to just 15 (the celebrant is not included in that number, but the couple, witnesses and guests are) and wedding receptions are not permitted. There is no restriction on travel to and from a marriage ceremony, regardless of location, but Scottish Government guidance indicates that when considering travelling from an area in levels 1 to 4 to a level 0 area, invited guests should consider whether their journey is essential. The Government guidance states that “some people are essential to the ceremony: the couple, the two witnesses, the celebrant and any required interpreter. Others may also play a key role, such as people required for religious or belief reasons. However, other guests may not be essential.” Elsewhere, your attention is drawn to the following items which may be of interest.

The Autumn Issue of the Provincial Youth Newsletter has just been published and it highlights three events taking place this week, all hosted online by the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Tomorrow morning (Wednesday 18 November) sees the SCM host a session titled **What are we doing to prepare young people for the year ahead?** while on Friday it marks **Transgender Day of Remembrance** with a reflective prayer service, and Saturday sees the launch of the SCM's **Our Daily Bread** campaign which highlights food poverty among young people.

Further details of all three events, and other youth news, can be found in the PYC Newsletter via this link: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Autumn-20-Provincial-Youth-Newsletter.pdf>

In addition, a resource document titled **Being the Church and Doing Ministry in the time of Covid-19** is attached to this e-mail. Prepared by Dr Richard Tiplady, Director of Mixed Mode Training at the Scottish Episcopal Institute, the short paper considers how we can adapt to a 'new normal' given what we have learned this year. The paper was considered at the last meeting of the provincial Mission Board, and the Board felt it would be helpful to share it more widely.

Meanwhile, the Liturgy Committee has produced resources for Advent, which will be distributed this week via a further e-mail.

Kind regards

Donald Walker
Director of Communications
Scottish Episcopal Church
07736 042 850