

Dear Clergy, Lay Readers, Vestry Secretaries and Diocesan Secretaries

A short statement from the Primus on behalf of the College of Bishops was issued on social media last night, following the First Minister's statement to the Scottish Parliament yesterday afternoon. The Primus's statement is available on the provincial website at: <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/pastoral-letter-from-the-college-of-bishops/>

The new lockdown in Scotland is intended to help people stay at home wherever possible. In applying the rules, this principle should be used to help in any interpretation.

In the light of the First Minister's announcement and guidance issued by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Episcopal Church Advisory Group draws the following points to your attention:

1. Tightened restrictions now apply to all areas of mainland Scotland, the Isle of Skye and a few other islands (see below for the Level 3 islands which are not part of the national lockdown restrictions). The Government's "stay at home" guidance applicable in all those areas is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/>
At the present time, these new restrictions are to apply for the month of January. Whether they will be extended after that remains to be seen (they will be reviewed by Government in two weeks' time).
2. Places of worship in these areas are closed for both congregational worship and individual prayer. Technically, the closure requirement applies from the beginning of Friday this week but since the "stay at home" guidance does not include, as a permitted exception, attendance at an act of worship by a member of the public, any service planned to take place prior to Friday should now only take place as a streamed or broadcast service.
3. The Government Guidance permits a "minister of religion or worship leader" to attend church to lead an act of worship for broadcast or streaming (ie without a congregation physically present). The overall spirit of the guidance is to minimise the possibility of social contact and it would therefore appear that, for example, worship bands comprising volunteer church members ought to record/stream from home rather than from a church building.
4. Funerals and marriages may still take place in church. Funerals are subject to a maximum attendance of 20 people but funeral wakes may not take place. Marriages are subject to a maximum of just 5 people comprising the celebrant, the couple and two witnesses and wedding receptions may not take place.
5. For clergy or church workers, it remains permissible to visit the vulnerable but pastoral visits of other sorts should be conducted in a non-physical way.
6. For those limited areas of Scotland which remain in level 3, public worship remains permissible under the Government guidance, subject to maximum of 50 people. A list of the islands which remain in level 3 is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/pages/protection-level-3/>

Kind regards

Donald Walker
Director of Communications
Scottish Episcopal Church
07736 042 850

www.scotland.anglican.org

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