

Dear Clergy, Lay Readers, Vestry Secretaries and Diocesan Secretaries

As you will be aware, the First Minister addressed the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday this week and announced the publication of the Government's "Strategic Framework Update". That update is available at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Strategic Framework update - February 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Coronavirus-(COVID-19):-Strategic-Framework-update--February-2021-)

The Church's Advisory Group will meet towards the end of next week to consider the First Minister's statement and the Strategic Framework Update, and will issue a further communication after that.

In the meantime, there is no change to the fact that all of Scotland, with the exception of a small number of islands, continues in lockdown with places of worship remaining closed for communal worship. The First Minister indicated that the Government would expect to see "...phased but significant re-opening of the economy, including non-essential retail, hospitality and services like gyms and hairdressers..." from the last week in April. However she also stated that "communal worship will also, we hope, restart around 5 April, albeit with restricted numbers to begin with. However, in deciding the exact date for this, we will also take account of the timing of major religious festivals, for example Easter and Passover so it may be a few days earlier when communal worship can start".

The Strategic Framework Update also appears to envisage that when places of worship reopen, they are likely to be subject to a cap of 20 people attending. It should be noted, however, that at this stage, dates and indeed the cap of 20 are provisional only.

As indicated, we expect to issue a further communication after next week's meeting of the Advisory Group.

Kind regards

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