

Dear Clergy, Lay Readers, Vestry Secretaries and Diocesan Secretaries

The Advisory Group of the Scottish Episcopal Church has taken note of the announcement by the First Minister on 11 May about the acceleration of lockdown easing and further changes to take effect on Monday 17 May.

The most relevant changes, in relation to places of worship, are as follows: –

1. The whole of Scotland will enter level 2 on 17 May with the exception of Moray which is likely to remain in level 3 for a further period (as yet unspecified). Government is to confirm the position in relation to Moray later this week. Also, on 17 May, the Western Isles, Orkney, Shetland, all islands in the Highland (except for Skye), and the Inner Hebrides in Argyll (including Islay, Jura and Mull) will move to level 1.
2. Since different parts of Scotland will find themselves in different levels, a reminder that cross-border travel between local authority areas is permissible to attend one's normal place of worship or to lead an act of worship.
3. There is a very limited relaxation in relation to singing. Congregational singing is still not possible but from 17 May it will be now permissible to have more than one singer "at the front". It is clear that the Government does not intend this to be interpreted as a return to a full-blown choirs but a small number of singers will be permissible. At the time of issue of this email, the Government's guidance on this specific point is still in the course of revision by Government. We expect it to be posted to the Government website by the end of this week and, therefore, you should refer to that guidance for greater clarity on this point, including any comment made there about appropriate transmission mitigations: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/>
4. More generally, Government has confirmed to us that it is actively looking at the possibility of allowing congregational singing at level 1 but, as yet, there is no confirmation that that will be possible from next week for those in level 1.
5. Government has also confirmed that in the coming weeks it is undertaking a review of the requirement to physically distance in a number of indoor settings, including places of worship. As yet, however, the 2 m distancing rule remains in place.

Kind regards

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