

**To: all clergy (including with Permission to Officiate)**  
**cc: Lay Ministers; Churchwardens; PCC Secretaries**

Date: 25 March 2020  
Our ref: MJS/rhw-bp8972

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Once again, we are writing to you with an update from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. We are so grateful to you for the way you have responded to recent advice on suspending public services. Now we must go a stage further in closing all our church buildings and observing the government's instructions to only leave home for essential trips. This is a very sad time – many of our church buildings have been used for daily prayer for centuries – but we simply cannot risk lives through keeping them open. Please contact your Area Dean or Archdeacon if you have queries about this.

We want to reiterate our plea to focus on prayer and pastoral care at this time. The Prime Minister has referred to our situation as a national emergency and therefore we must renew our efforts to look outwards and serve others. However, we recognise that many practical questions are emerging for our churches and rather than give a long, detailed response to each of these questions, we simply want to refer you to the Diocesan website for further advice. Alongside general advice about our response to Coronavirus, there is information about:

1. **Safeguarding** – this remains core to all we are and all we do, and it is important that we continue to follow good processes, in particular safer recruitment for volunteers. There is information about this on our website.
2. **Buildings** – with our buildings closed, there is advice about security.
3. **Annual Meetings and Elections** – Bishop Martyn has signed an instrument which extends the deadline for holding APCMs until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020.
4. **Finance and Parish Contributions** – the current emergency is having a huge impact on the national economy, businesses and the personal circumstances of many individuals. We know that this will severely impact the church. Discussions are underway with the government and with the Church Commissioners about support for dioceses and parishes. We will be issuing further advice in the coming weeks about Parish Contributions and support for staff. Please be patient with the Diocesan Finance Team and Generous Giving Team in the meantime.

5. **St Martins House** is now closed, and all staff are working from home. This means that normal phone lines are not monitored. Please contact staff by email and please be patient if they are not able to respond immediately. Bishops and Archdeacons remain available to you on the following numbers:

Bishop Martyn 0116 270 8985	Bishop Guli 07771948190
Archdeacon Claire 07772718225	Archdeacon Richard 07487 616648

Finally, we sincerely hope that you will look after yourselves well at this time of heightened stress and anxiety. Please do not fill your diary with new demands but use this time to learn about what one writer has termed 'slow church'.

Yesterday in the church's calendar, we remembered Archbishop Oscar Romero. You may know the poem composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, as a reflection on the anniversary of Romero's martyrdom.

#### **A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN**

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.*

*The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime  
only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise  
that is God's work.*

*Nothing we do is complete,  
which is another way of saying  
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.*

*No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.*

*No programme  
accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives  
includes everything.*

*That is what we are about.  
We plant a seed that will one day grow.*

*We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations  
that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects  
far beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything,  
and there is a sense of liberation  
in realising that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well.*

*It may be incomplete,  
but it is a beginning,  
a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace  
to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference  
between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.*

*We are prophets of a future not our own.*

You remain much in our prayers.



The Rt Revd Martyn Snow  
Bishop of Leicester



The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani  
Bishop of Loughborough