

Sent: Sunday, June 7, 2020 11:22 AM
To: Jon Harcourt
Subject: Churches reopening for private prayer

To all clergy and churchwardens

Dear Colleague,

You will have seen that the government made known last night that churches will be allowed to open for private prayer from 15 June. I see this as good news which establishes an important principle in that, as the BBC put it, 'the government was persuaded that if the public is ready to re-engage in retail therapy then people of faith ought to be allowed to enter places of worship.'

That having been said, it is vital to be clear that not all churches can or should open at present. There are many which cannot yet safely do so and no-one should feel bounced or pushed into this. Indeed, it is not straightforward to reopen the Cathedral even for limited access and the Chapter will be taking a very careful view about the date on which this will become possible.

The archdeacons have already pointed you towards guidance on risk assessments to determine whether not it is safe for particular churches to open for private prayer. In the next day or two they will be inviting churchwardens to briefings/consultations on Zoom together with Mark Carter to give input and advice and take questions. As bishops and archdeacons, we are here to support you in the decision you reach after careful consideration and consultation.

It is worth observing that the entry into lockdown was simple and straightforward but opening up is likely to continue to be more ragged and contentious. I hope that we shall be able to set a good example to society in remembering that not all things that are lawful are beneficial (cf 1 Corinthians 10.23).

Thanks you for your continuing ministry in these stressful times and God bless you in it.

+John

Dr John Inge, Bishop of Worcester