

Message on behalf of the College of Bishops at re-issue of Phase 3 Guidance for re-opening of churches and pastoral activities in Scottish Episcopal Churches

“The pandemic in Scotland is still affecting every aspect of personal, community and church life.

“The College of Bishops, the Standing Committee and the Officers of the SEC remain committed to the care and support of all our church communities. We will do this in part by personal care and attention to clergy and lay leadership and in part by providing revised and ongoing guidance in relation to the pastoral and liturgical ministry of our churches. The Scottish Government’s regulations are becoming increasingly complex to follow and dealing with apparent exceptions and inconsistencies across faith and other sectors can be very frustrating when we want clear answers. This complexity is the inevitable reality of safely emerging from lockdown. This week’s re-issue of our guidance reflects the complexity of the situation: please contact your diocese for further clarification or guidance.

“A key message for us all in this hard time of ongoing lockdown: In all church life, please be kind to yourself and be gentle with one another. For you and all those who are volunteering and supporting our shared life, the pressure and stress of the ongoing pandemic, from a personal and a community view, can be immense and the ongoing timescales can feel very long.

“In these hard times, there are also areas of great encouragement in the life of the SEC. The creativity of online/remote pastoral care and worship has been and remains excellent. In the engagement and interest in online encounter with faith, there are real discipleship possibilities to learn from the experience of being unable to physically gather. And as churches have worked towards limited re-opening, the commitment and quality of the work carried out across Scotland to re-open safely has been superb. You have all worked so, so faithfully and so hard through these months. So please remember: be kind to yourselves and to each other as we continue to respond faithfully in this pandemic to God’s call to us as church communities.

“Wishing you safety and all God’s blessings.”

*Rt Rev Andrew Swift, Bishop of Brechin and member of the Advisory Group on the Re-opening of Churches, on behalf of the College of Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church  
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