

Dear Clergy, Lay Readers, Vestry Secretaries and Diocesan Secretaries

In the absence this week of Donald Walker, Director of Communications, a brief update in the light of the First Minister's statement to Parliament yesterday.

Most local authority areas are to remain at their existing "level" in the Government Strategic Framework. However, Fife, Perth and Kinross and Angus are all being moved from level 2 to level 3 with effect from Friday this week in the light of a sharply rising trajectory of Covid cases. There is no difference in relation to the restrictions applying to places of worship, weddings and funerals, as between levels 2 and 3 and, consequently, there is no change to the guidance applying to churches in those areas.

The First Minister also announced a slight relaxation of the rules on social gatherings applying in the Northern and Western Isles so that in those areas residents will be permitted to meet one other household inside, up to a maximum of 6 people.

It is inevitable that some congregations will be experiencing cases where a member of the congregation catches the virus. Just to avoid any confusion, the requirement on churches to keep records of those attending worship is for the purposes of providing information, when asked, by the Government's Test and Protect authorities. It is not for churches to undertake their own internal track and trace process using that information. More information on Test and Protect, including contact telephone numbers is available at: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/test-and-protect>

The Government has updated its Places of Worship guidance in the light of the Strategic Framework and can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/>

No further changes are being made to our own guidance at this stage, the most recent versions of which were issued on 2 November.

Best wishes

John Stuart

John F Stuart
Secretary General

Scottish Episcopal Church
21 Grosvenor Crescent
Edinburgh
EH12 5EE

Tel: 0131-225-6357
fax: 0131-346-7247