

To all churchwardens

Now that we have been living with Covid-19 restrictions for several weeks and Easter is over, it seems helpful to provide a summary of information that may be helpful to you in the care and (future) development of your church buildings and other updates.

1. Covid-19 Information

The main resources to deal with issues arising from the Covid-19 restrictions and particularly the current temporary closure of church buildings are at:

- i) **Diocese of St Albans** <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/dac/covid-19-church-buildings-updates/>

This is our specific information including the Chancellor's directions about dealing with public notice for faculty applications; grants for church building works (more below); initial advice to churchwardens (March 2020) and a link to the national C of E website pages (below).

You can also find lots of information and resources for church life at the [Living God's Love At All Times One-Stop Shop](#). Updates will shortly include information about copyright licensing for streaming services.

- ii) **Church of England** <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

This is the national guidance for churches. It includes Q&A and links to a number of documents covering different topics.

- iii) [***Securing and caring for your church buildings during the Covid-19 pandemic***](#) deals with practical questions relating to the church building and churchyard, insurance, regular checks, insurance etc. It is currently Version 3 but it is updated regularly to reflect the developing situation and to give answers to questions asked by parishes. I am in regular touch with colleagues at the national Church Buildings Council to raise questions from parishes, for example on the question of 5-yearly electrical inspections. Please see especially the information about **Water Charges** and the possibility of obtaining reductions.

The senior staff at the Church Buildings Council also liaise with colleagues in Government, the main church insurers, Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the police and other bodies to raise issues on behalf of churches across the country.

- iv) **Grants for church building works** [***This is our update***](#) on how grants and grant-aided projects for church buildings work will be affected by Covid-19. It covers national funders such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund and those with a more local focus. The update describes changes made by funders such as extra flexibility for existing projects, postponed application dates and relevant new emergency funding. It also notes where existing funding schemes will continue.

If you have a question that is not answered in the national or diocesan information, please contact your Archdeacon, the [Diocesan Registry](#) or me. If we don't have the answer, we'll try and find out.

2. New and updated information

- i) **Faculties, Minor Matters, the on-line portal...** Many of you will remember the DAC Information Events for parishes held in January and the very start of February. The resources from those events are available on the diocesan website at: <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/dac/dac-events/>. The presentations cover:
- a. The new **Faculty Rules** from 1 April, including extended Minor Matters Lists A and B and a changed process for consulting external bodies as part of the faculty process
 - b. Developments in the **St Albans On-line Portal** for making applications for DAC advice leading to a List B permission or a faculty. We and the Registry are still dealing with applications during the current restrictions, so if you have urgent work to do or a project you want to prepare for when the restrictions ease, do apply! Please use the portal for all applications. You can now complete the faculty petition form (form 3A) on-line and the Registry and Chancellor can deal with your application using the portal too.
 - c. **Quinquennial inspections** and the **appointment of professional advisers** (architects and surveyors).
 - d. The review of the **Churchyard Regulations**. Work continues on the revision to the Diocesan Churchyard Regulations and associated guidance, and to the Application form to introduce a memorial into a churchyard. Progress has been slowed by the restrictions imposed by the pandemic but it is intended to publish the revised documents online as soon as possible. The Churchyard Regulations, with the Application form to introduce a memorial into a churchyard, and new guidance which will be aimed at families, will explain why extra faculty permissions are needed for individual cases and do not offer a precedent, and offer sensitive advice about the need for decorations at the graveside to be restricted and only temporary. A guide for clergy will offer practical guidance and advice and share best practice, and offer links to other useful sources of information. Please note that all the forms relating to churchyards, including the current memorial application form (“blue form”) now known as *CR1* and faculty application forms for exhumations and grave space or ashes plot reservations are now available to download from the [Diocesan Registry](#) page of the diocesan website.
- ii) **Environment** The General Synod resolved in February that every part of the Church of England should work towards being carbon-neutral by 2030. What might that mean and how can we achieve it? There will be a debate about it in the Diocesan Synod once the current restrictions are eased. Heat loss measures, renewable energy and heating as well as the environment of the churchyard and carbon capture through trees will all be issues to work through and the DAC is working with colleagues in the diocesan Environment group and nationally to provide information and advice. This brings me to...

- iii) **Webinars** The Diocesan Flourishing Churches Team are offering [webinars](#) on a range of topics including – on themes relating to churches and churchyards - Living Churchyards and Eco Church. You may also be interested in the wide-ranging webinars offered by [SPAB](#), the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

- iv) **Church Representation Rules** The new 2020 edition of the [Church Representation Rules](#) came into force on 1 January. The Rules are proving very useful in enabling PCCs to transact some business whilst the Cov-19 restrictions mean people cannot meet. **Rule M29** allows the PCC Chair to decide that particular items of business may be dealt with by correspondence, but care is needed to ensure no-one is excluded by the use of a particular method of communication. There is more information about this provision in the main Church of England Covid-19 resources for parishes. The [Introduction](#) to the new Rules provides a good summary of the changes and the thinking behind them.

We are living in very strange times and Covid-19 is having an impact on us personally, in our daily life, our networks of family and friends, our churches and our communities. We're all having to find new ways of working, using unfamiliar technologies as well as the phone and notes through neighbours' doors. Thank you for all that you are doing to care for your church building and to continue worship and outreach in your community. Please get in touch with me with any queries – or just to say how you are doing.

Emma Critchley

Pastoral and Advisory Secretary

Please note that the diocesan office is currently closed and staff are working at home. Post and general phone messages will be picked up once a day.

You can make applications for DAC advice leading to a faculty or List B permission via the diocesan on-line portal at <https://portal.stalbans.anglican.org>. There is advice and information on the diocesan website (address below) including DAC advice leaflets and grant information on the Church Buildings pages.

If you have a query, please e-mail me and include a contact phone number if a telephone conversation will be helpful.

For general information and queries, please see the Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

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