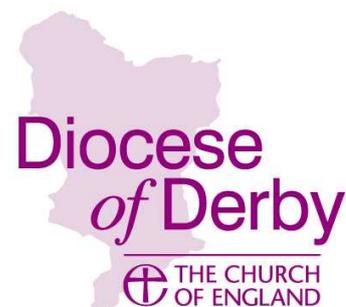


**The Rt Revd Libby Lane
Bishop of Derby**



28 March 2020

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Peace be with you.

Guidance for streaming Acts of Worship

I'm writing to offer guidance with the intention that it is a resource for you as you prepare for worship tomorrow and in the coming weeks. You know your communities best, and you will be learning what is necessary for you to sustain your own spirituality, and enable your congregations to flourish as they discover what it is to be church when we can't gather at church. I trust your discretion and judgement, knowing your desire, like mine, is to be faithful to the One who has called us into the privilege of ordained ministry, and to support your colleagues, all of us facing the same pressures, with grace and generosity.

How clergy, other ministers, and lay people wish to worship at home privately is a matter for them. There is no need for them to turn it in to a public act of worship. However, in the light of changed circumstances I am issuing this simple guidance about the streaming, whether live or pre-recorded, of acts of worship in the diocese of Derby. This is addressed particularly to clergy who feel confident in doing this. No-one should be under pressure to stream worship or feel guilty if they can't. There are other, equally valuable, ways to maintain 'common prayer'.

Now that our church buildings are closed, our worshipping life is going to be different. As the Archbishops and Bishops [wrote on 27 March](#), '...for a season, the centre for the liturgical life of the church must be the home not the church building'. They go on to write, 'Streaming worship from home shows that we are alongside those who are having to self-isolate and those who are forgoing so many other things in their lives they used to rely on...Moreover, to pray from and in the home may help us to show that the church is, as we all know, us, the people of God, not our buildings.'

All clergy, when they take the Declaration of Assent, promise that 'in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.' This broad obligation remains when streaming services. Although only one person may be physically present, the act of streaming gives the service a public dimension and will be seen as representing the Church of England.

In fact, however, the canon law of the Church of England does make provision for exceptional circumstances. Canon B5 allows the incumbent to use forms of service considered suitable by him or her for occasions on which no provision is made in the Canons and other regulatory provisions, and to authorise other ministers to also use said forms of service. The proviso is that such forms of service 'shall be neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.'

I am, therefore, content for clergy to use their discretion in this matter when streaming **non-eucharistic services**. It would be good practice, though, for decisions about streaming services to be made at a benefice level, wherever possible, to ensure consistency of approach within the benefice. One streamed service per benefice on Sunday would be a good model.

The celebration of **Holy Communion** is not quite so straightforward. Canon B40 states that clergy need the Bishop's permission to celebrate Holy Communion other than in a consecrated building, with the exception of the houses of the sick and dying. I am happy to give that permission generally, until such time as government restrictions are lifted.

My reading of the Canons and the Book of Common Prayer is that for a service of Holy Communion to be a valid act of public worship, at least one other person needs to communicate with the priest. Services of Holy Communion should not, therefore, be streamed unless there is at least one other person - who is a member of their own household - receiving the sacrament alongside the president, Thus we are seen to maintain the injunction to 'stay home: save lives'.

Those watching or listening to a streamed service of Holy Communion are, in essence, participating in a spiritual way. It is not the understanding of the Church of England that bread and wine consumed by those watching are consecrated by the priest who is celebrating a streamed service of Holy Communion. For those watching the streaming, their communion is a spiritual one. As rubric in the order for the Communion of the Sick in the Book of Common Prayer aptly puts it, if someone cannot attend the service because of any just impediment, 'they do eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to their soul's health, although they do not receive the Sacrament with their mouth.' (Adapted to make the language inclusive!)

Thank you for all you are doing to engage creatively with this challenge. We will learn as we go along and more resources will be shared, both nationally and locally. I attach two such resources, the [Archbishops' note](#) on Spiritual Communion, and some personal reflections by Bishop Jack Nicholls, both of which draw attention to the spiritual implications of the eucharistic fast we are now experiencing.

I have also been asked to alert you to the possible copyright implications of streaming services, and the attached leaflet gives the necessary guidance which I hope will be helpful.

I will not be streaming tomorrow, although I will be celebrating Holy Communion with my household. Last weekend it seemed right to gather the prayers and praises of the Diocese at the Cathedral: this week it will be my pleasure to 'drop in' to your services and join with you across the Diocese. We are reviewing best ways to observe and celebrate Holy Week and Easter and will share that with you next week.

Be assured that in all this you are in my prayers, with thanksgiving for your perseverance and faithfulness.

Shine as a light in the world, to the glory of God the Father.

And go in peace.

+ Lobby Derby