

## Sunday Services in Non-Consecrated Buildings

### Canon B40 states:

No minister shall celebrate the Holy Communion elsewhere than in a consecrated building within his cure or other building licensed for the purpose, except he have permission so to do from the bishop of the diocese: Provided that at all times he may celebrate the Holy Communion as provided by Canon B 37 in any private house wherein there is any person sick, or dying, or so impotent that he cannot go to church.

This means that if a service of Holy Communion were to be held in a parish hall, permission must first be obtained from the bishop. Some churches have asked the bishop for such permission, and it is likely that others may follow suit. Given the likely cost of heating and the demography of many of our congregations, it would be difficult to refuse a request. Guidance is being sought from the National Church Institutions, but meanwhile the following criteria are proposed:

- No diocese-wide permission will be issued.
- Unless the consecrated building is in a dangerous condition, occasional offices should be held in the consecrated building which should be heated.
- Requests should be supported by a resolution from the PCC/DCC following local consultation and discussion.
- Consideration should be given to the effect of turning off heating on the fabric of the building – guidance may be sought from the DAC.
- Permission would be time limited: Ash Wednesday falls on 2 March 2023, so seems a suitable date liturgically and meteorologically.
- Permission is permission, not obligation. If the winter is mild and the consecrated building can be kept reasonably warm, it would be preferred to a non-consecrated option.
- The alternative venue should be suitable for worship, with consideration given to accessibility, furniture, lighting, acoustics and aesthetics. A risk assessment should be agreed. Where possible, live-streaming should continue.
- Attention should be given to insurance, both of the buildings and of accoutrements being carried from the church building to the alternative venue. If the policy document is not clear, the insurer should be consulted.
- Any item on the church inventory should not be removed from the church or church complex without temporary permission granted by the Archdeacon.
- Care should be taken over communicating with the local community, in order to pre-empt any objections, to reassure people that this is a temporary measure and not an attempt to abandon a consecrated building and also to inform those who might stay away from a cold church that worship is continuing.