

To those who lead our local churches

## Baptism, Wedding and Funeral Services – update, 24 March



Questions arise in many congregations about whether we can host and conduct wedding and funeral services in the current emergency. This update responds to the Prime Minister's broadcast on 23 March. It is possible that this guidance could change in the days and weeks ahead. But this is how we appear to stand just now.

**Neither baptism nor wedding services are allowed** at the moment. These are among the various kinds of gathering that the Government has banned. That ruling will be a very distressing for couples who were on the threshold of a new life together. But for the next few weeks we have not been given a choice.

**Funerals are still allowed, but we must keep them very small.** Plan a simple committal ceremony at cemetery or crematorium with an intentionally very small number of people present.

Tributes can be paid in other ways – either online, or in a church newsletter – or given in a memorial service later in the year. All of that will surely feel unsatisfactory. But there is not a satisfactory way to deal with these issues. We don't want anyone's life to end because someone attended a funeral.

**Places of worship should remain open for solitary prayer.** Whilst we are seeking greater clarity on the actual interpretation, it is assumed that this refers to those denominations and faiths where a daily act of worship is required to be conducted by the incumbent only. The advice is that our churches should remain closed for the time being, so far as worship is concerned.

**Foodbanks and other essentials for the community.** The Government's guidance specifically mentions foodbanks and homeless shelters as facilities that may stay open. [Read the document.](#)

**Any leaders in our Church who are vulnerable** – either because they are over 70, or because of health issues – **must stand down from public duty and work remotely from home.** As a Church, we ask those who care for us to care for themselves too, especially when life could be at risk.

With thanks for all you are doing and bearing in these days,

John Proctor  
General Secretary

Nicola Furley-Smith  
Secretary for Ministries