

Diocese of Brechin: News Bulletin

24th March 2022

Covid Updates and Developments



Coronavirus guidelines

The SEC Advisory Group sent an email to clergy, lay readers and vestry secretaries last week (16th March) with a great deal of detail about the changing way that Covid restrictions will be approached by churches. The legal requirement to wear face masks in Places of Worship remains in place for a few more weeks, but most other 'hard restrictions' will end soon giving churches freedom to return to 'pre-pandemic' practice. Quoting the email: "Each congregation will now need to consider carefully how it navigates the journey from its current arrangements to a less constrained future."

From this week (21st March) the legal regulations requiring those responsible for places of worship to take measures to minimise the spread of the virus on their premises have ceased and been replaced with high level, non-prescriptive guidance. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-places-of-worship/>.

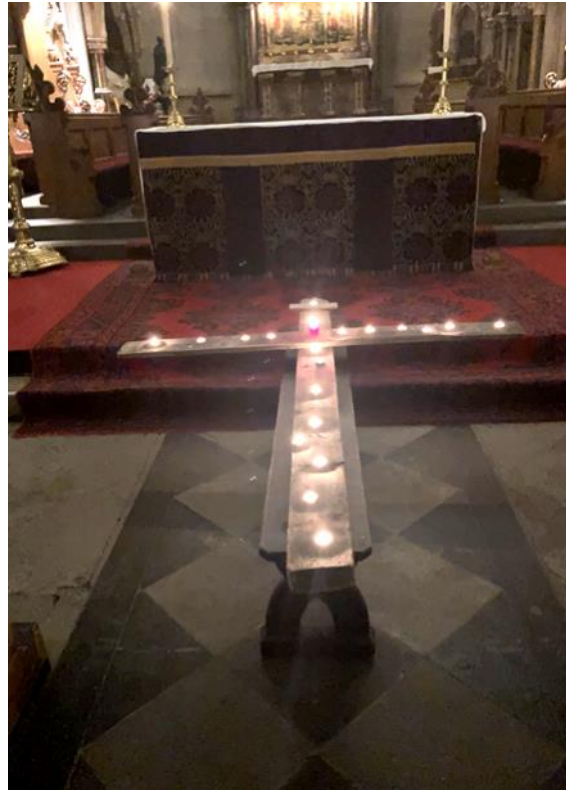
Each church now has to decide which changes to make and when to make them, taking account its own circumstances and a pastoral assessment of views locally. The details and timing of all such changes will be considered by clergy and vestries. Churches will be supported as they develop plans for a return to more normal church life by the Diocesan Office and Bishop.

For the moment, please continue to wear a face covering in church and please receive vaccination and boosters as offered.

With this change in approach, the SEC Advisory Group sees a diminishing role for itself, but it will continue to monitor developments and where appropriate and likely to be helpful will add to and update the FAQs on the provincial website. In the meantime, the most recent guidance document issued by the Advisory Group in November 2021 will remain on the provincial website but only as an archive resource rather than as a working document.

Second Anniversary of Lockdown a Space for Prayer and Reflection:

"Letting Go and Looking Forward" in the Cathedral



Candles lit to remember the lockdowns

Photo: Elizabeth Thomson on Twitter

A service was held at in the Cathedral in Dundee to mark the second anniversary of the 2020 lockdown on the national 'Day of Reflection' for the Covid-19 pandemic. As restrictions ease but the pandemic is still very much present in the country, 'Letting Go & Looking Forward' was an opportunity for an ecumenical reflection service led by Dundee city centre churches.

Provost Elizabeth opened the act of worship, supported by a group from the choir. Other voices read lessons, and Rev Emma McDonald from the Church of Scotland and Very Rev. Monsignor Aldo Angelosanto from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dunkeld led prayers. Candles were lit to remember people or incidents and place on a cross at the front of the nave (see photo above) and people shared their experiences of lockdown and supporting others through the hard times, especially in the 2020 initial shock of the pandemic.

War in Ukraine: Church Response

The war continuing and worsening in Ukraine dominates the news and thoughts and prayers of people throughout the world. Ten million people have been displaced and over three million refugees have now fled to neighbouring countries. This remains the fastest growing refugee crisis since the Second World War and it shows no sign of easing.

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR—a multi-faith partnership including the SEC) has some guidance for any church or individual: <http://www.sfar.org.uk/7-things-you-can-do-to-respond-to-the-situation-in-ukraine/>. Some of these are described below:

Donate

The most direct and immediate way to support Ukrainian refugees is to donate money to the major appeals helping in the area. Please continue to support agencies helping the refugees. SFAR has some smaller options. Bigger appeals include:

The UK Disasters Emergency Committee (an umbrella appeal for [major UK aid charities](#)). Donate personally or with any church collections at:

<https://donation.dec.org.uk/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), also heavily involved in local aid activities for Ukraine:

<https://www.unrefugees.org.uk/where-help-is-needed/ukraine-situation/>

Some churches are arranging fundraising events (e.g [St Mary Magdalene Dundee Coffee Morning](#)—this Saturday: 26th March) - follow links above for details.

Pray for Peace

Please pray for peace in Ukraine. Pray that world leaders, especially in Russia and their partners, accept their responsibility to promote peace and stop wars. Churches are continuing to hold services/vigils to offer prayer and comfort.

Refugee support—developing schemes

The UK response to refugees from Ukraine is changing, maybe somewhat slowly, and new schemes are coming online for refugees to gain visa-based access to safety in the UK.

Individuals/Churches—engage with developing UK schemes for refugees?

The UK Govt 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme <https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/> has been launched with the Scottish Government as a 'super-sponsor' for Ukrainian refugees: it is hoped that this will allow the local authorities of Scotland to act to co-ordinate the matching of refugee 'guests' and 'hosts' with proper checks, safeguards and support in place for all concerned. The churches are still awaiting details of how to engage via this scheme, as well as local work starting to look at possible available housing stock that might be available for refugee families. Individuals can still register as hosts on the above website.

This remains a fast developing area: watch for church guidance on safe and effective ways to respond directly for refugee support which the Diocese will aim to 'signpost' as it becomes available.

SEI Lent Course Online: Remaining Sessions Postponed

The [Scottish Episcopal Institute](#) online Lent Course has been postponed due to a family bereavement. Please watch out for when the remaining sessions of this course: 'Episcopalians and Their Ethics' will be re-scheduled.

Remaining Sessions.

~~21 Mar:~~ How do I tell good from evil?

~~28 Mar:~~ What is conscience?

~~4 Apr:~~ Why follow conscience?

~~11 Apr:~~ Where do I go with Christian ethics?

Online Worship for the SEC

The Scottish Episcopal Church continues to offer 'national' worship online every week. A Sunday service, each from one of the Dioceses, is continuing in the form of a service broadcast at 11am each Sunday. This will continue beyond the pandemic. There are more details of each week's services at:

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/broadcast-sunday-worship/>

Any news to share in the Bulletin?

If you have stories and photos of events around the diocese, we would love to share these in the bulletin.

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