The Diocese of
Southwark

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To all Clergy and Churchwardens
in the Diocese of Southwark

Feast of St Thomas the Apostle, 2020

Clergy Well-Being and the Reopening of Church Buildings

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are immensely grateful to you all for the efforts that have been made, and the imagination and creativity that have been shown, in sustaining the worshipping life of our parishes. This has taken a great many different forms, and we know that it has been welcomed and valued by congregations, as well as giving glory to God.

Now we are moving into a phase where we can once again, step by step, open our church buildings for worship. This is a cause of rejoicing, but we want to say clearly that whilst some parishes will be ready to re-start public worship in the coming days, we fully realise that for others it will of necessity be a longer journey to reopening. Above all, our commitment is to ensure that our churches re-open as safely as possible.

We are encouraging Clergy to factor in the need to take annual leave and consider directing congregations to online alternatives should they decide to take their leave before reopening for worship. We would encourage Deaneries to work together and co-ordinate the worship that is available both online and in churches over this period. To help with this, the Archdeacons will be making available a series of online sermons which they hope will be a useful resource for parishes during the summer.

In deciding when to reopen churches, Clergy well-being is an important factor as we know that in order to minister to others we have to allow God and his people to minister to us. Let us be not anxious. Ministry is a marathon and not a sprint. Congregations have, during the weeks of lockdown, been loyal and supportive, and with the creativity shown in providing online worship so widely new worshippers have been drawn in. The Church of England is not going away.

We are particularly grateful to Churchwardens and we express thanks and appreciation for all that has been done to sustain parish life and ministry through this time — and we are mindful of the burdens borne by all our Church Officers, not least those whose churches are in vacancy. Please take good care of yourselves as we now look to the next stage of recovery, though our worship will look very different from what we are accustomed to.

We would be very glad if, this Sunday, Wardens could read this letter to congregations through whatever medium you are currently using for worship, if at all possible, and also please circulate it widely.

With thanks for our partnership in the Gospel

+Christopher Southwark

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun
Bishop of Southwark

+Richard Kingston

The Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham
Bishop of Kingston

+Jonathan Croydon

The Rt Revd Jonathan Clark
Bishop of Croydon

+Karowei Woolwich

The Rt Revd Dr Karowei Dorgu
Bishop of Woolwich

The Diocese of Southwark
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