

Diocese of Brechin: News Bulletin

5th January 2021

January 2021 Lockdown

Latest Covid Update for the Scottish Episcopal Church



Coronavirus guidelines

On Monday 4th January the First Minister announced that a new 'lockdown' would apply for almost all of Scotland: this applies to all the areas covered by the SEC Diocese of Brechin. In this new lockdown (which came into effect at midnight on the 4th/5th of January) Places of Worship must now close again.

This is a sad but very necessary decision on the part of the government, as the virus statistics are showing an alarming increase after the Christmas period, in large part affected by the new, more infectious, strain of the COVID-19 virus. Without increased restrictions the NHS in Scotland is in real danger of being overwhelmed.

The change to churches means that we must return to a model of remote pastoral care and (where possible) online worship/gathering. There is an allowance in the government rules for a minister of religion to travel to a church to record or livestream worship, but no-one outside their household should be with them if they choose to do this. More details of the pastoral and other impacts of the lockdown should follow this week as the SEC Advisory Group reviews the details of the government rules.

This has been a long, long journey since last March, with the pattern of increasing and decreasing restrictions a hard way to live and support each other as Christian communities. Please be gentle with yourself and with each other in this latest phase of restriction. The very real hope that vaccines now offer mean that this latest lockdown may not be for too long a period. In the meantime, pray, remain connected with each other, remain in your home as much as possible and keep safe and well.

Happy New Year & Epiphany Greetings

The New Year is beginning with restrictions and anxiety as the global pandemic continues and Scotland re-enters a form of lockdown. This is a hard and dark time for all humanity: but the hope that vaccines offer are a sign of light in this darkness.



The feast of the Epiphany (which many churches celebrated last Sunday) is a way that we remember the real light in the darkness of the world! The account, from Matthew's gospel, of the wise magi travelling to greet

the infant Jesus, revealing his divine identity in praise and valuable gifts, is a rich theological presentation of the revelation (or Epiphany) of God in Jesus. The world that Jesus was born into was a dark and dangerous place, with Roman occupation of Israel/Palestine oppressing the people of Israel and life precarious and dangerous. The hope for salvation that the people of Israel had been praying for—the new king—was a political hope as much as a hope that God would favour them. The Magi—gentiles—are shown as recognising the divinity of the child Jesus to show that God's plan for salvation is broader than just for a people living in the ancient near east some 2,000 years ago. The fulfilment of prophecy is for all people in all time!

Epiphany remains one of the most important feasts in the church's calendar, with the following weeks leading towards Candlemas, another key feast that reveals the divinity of Jesus!

May your journey through this 'locked-down' Epiphany season be one that is blessed by God. Even as we cannot, for a while longer, meet together in-person for worship and fellowship, we can remain connected in prayer and online. Technology has become a blessing to church community life: another means to reveal the light and love of God even in dark and anxious times!

Every blessing for 2021

“Connecting Scotland” Programme

The SEC would like to draw to your attention information regarding the Connecting Scotland Programme which aims to assist those who are “digitally excluded” to get online.

The programme allows organisations to apply for certain categories of individual to be supplied with an iPad with mobile connectivity to enable



them to access the internet. This may be of particular interest to congregations with elderly church members or those with disabilities who are not currently digitally connected or families with children on low incomes. The programme is administered via local authorities. As part of the programme, the organisation needs to be in a position to provide a "digital champion", who could be a volunteer, and who would receive training under the Government scheme (and who need not be an IT expert) to help individuals receiving their iPad to get connected and make use of it.

The closing date for the current round of applications is 18 January 2021. Information regarding the programme is available at the following link which also gives details about the process for making applications: [Connecting Scotland](#)

Faith in Community Dundee— Food Provision and Money Advice

Faith in Community Dundee has provided an updated Food Provision list for the Christmas and New Year period.

They have also provided an updated Money Advice leaflet that includes information on opening times for advice services over the festive period.

Please follow the links to additional information.

[Food Provision](#) — [Christmas and New Year](#)

[Money Advice](#)

Further guidance and information will be supplied as any changes are notified. There remains great need for this help in Dundee—if you wish to support any of the projects listed in the sources above, that help would be greatly welcomed.

Scottish Episcopal Church online worship in the Pandemic—continuing through the January Lockdown

The church is in lockdown: but the church is still very much open!

The Scottish Episcopal Church will continue to offer ‘national’ worship online, of especial importance now that the churches in Scotland have to cease worship for the latest lockdown announced by the First Minister yesterday. Many churches are offering local online forms of worship (such as Facebook Live, Zoom, YouTube recordings) but the national, well-established, online offerings are continuing.

A special programme was presented up to and beyond Christmas, including a ‘Midnight Mass’ hosted by the cathedral in Dundee as well as a ‘virtual carol service’ recorded by several dozen individual singers, edited together.

The usual Sunday services, each led by one of the College of Bishops, will also continue in the form of a Eucharist broadcast at 11am through the current lockdown and beyond, as restrictions ease.

There are more details and downloads of previous weeks’ services at:

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

Pastoral Letter from the College of Bishops

The Primus has written a pastoral letter from the whole College of Bishops following yesterday’s announcement. Bishop Andrew says, ‘This letter reflects the pain that all will feel at the latest lockdown, but holds on to the sense of hope we can all share at news of vaccines and prompt decisions made for the good of all.’

The letter can be read at:

[Pastoral letter from the College of Bishops - The Scottish Episcopal Church \(anglican.org\)](#)

News to share? Please send...

If you have any events, ideas with worship or anything else to report, please send copy to Elliott at office@brechin.anglican.org. The Bulletin will come out each week for the foreseeable future.