

11 September 2020

To Licensed Clergy/Ministers, Churchwardens, PCC Secretaries, Deanery Lay Chairs and Deanery Secretaries

Dear All,

I hope this finds you well, though I recognise for many of us these remain anxious times. The significant rise in COVID-19 cases locally and nationally is particularly concerning, and means we face an ever-changing situation, especially as we now anticipate the new 'rule of six' from 14 September.

Having looked at the latest government communications about the 'rule of six', we are confident that we can carry on with the arrangements that we have established for Sunday worship over the last few weeks. So many of you have worked hard to ensure procedures are in place to allow worship to happen safely. The only difference is that people must not sit in groups of more than six, but recent experience suggests that is rarely happening anyway – if at all.

As you may know, there has also been some uncertainty over whether APCM's, annual meetings to elect Churchwardens, and Deanery Synod meetings could be held virtually, using Zoom or a similar platform. To resolve this question, the Bishop has signed some supplementary directions under Rule 78 of the [Church Representation Rules 2020](#) and section 10 of the [Churchwardens Measure 2001](#). These directions are attached (see bottom of this mailing), and should be read in conjunction with the direction given on 19 March, a copy of which is also attached for ease of reference. The new directions also contain explanatory notes at the end which offer more detailed information.

Essentially these new directions enable meetings to be held virtually, using Zoom or a similar platform, or using a combination of 'in person' and online, including telephone conferencing. As appropriate, please do take advantage of these directions to hold your 2020 APCM and annual meeting to elect Churchwardens by not later than 31 October 2020, if you have not already done so. APCM Forms are available [here](#). You may of course feel able to hold your meeting 'in person' following your local risk assessments to ensure a safe environment can be offered. These 'in person' meetings should not be affected by the 'rule of six' as they are part of our work as the church, as indeed is our worship.

Can I also remind you that at your APCM this year, you should elect Deanery Synod lay representatives for your parish. This is important because in 2021 there will be elections for a new Diocesan Synod as well as the General Synod election deferred from 2020, and the lay members of Deanery Synod are the electors for the Houses of Laity in both of these elections. The names of the lay Deanery Synod members elected by your APCM should please be sent in to the Diocesan Secretary as soon as possible after your APCM has been completed.

If you are in real difficulties over holding either a physical or virtual APCM and annual meeting by 31 October, please get in touch with me or with one of the Assistant Archdeacons as soon as possible.

Thank you for all you have been doing in serving the church and your local communities through these challenging times.

May we all continue to know God's grace and strength as we journey forwards together.

Every blessing,

Mark

The Venerable Mark Wroe

Archdeacon of Northumberland and Acting Archdeacon of Lindisfarne

Bishop's Instrument COVID – [Click here](#)

APCM Instrument – [Click here](#)