

# DIOCESE IN EUROPE

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THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

The Bishop in Europe:  
**The Right Reverend Dr. Robert Innes**



The Suffragan Bishop in Europe  
**The Right Reverend Dr. David Hamid**

19 July 2021

## *For Clergy, Readers and Churchwardens*

Dear Sister and Brothers

Many of you who are in touch with UK news will be aware that today, 19 July, the majority of legal restrictions regarding the control and management of the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted in England, with some variations in the other nations of the UK. Consequently, the Church of England has issued updated advice and guidance to coincide with the UK government's policy.

- It is important to note that this is guidance that is directed at the Church of England *in England*, as it is the UK which has relaxed the measures in force. In our Diocese in Europe we as bishops have reviewed the recent update and are convinced that considerable reflection and further preparation is needed, taking account the various national, regional and ecumenical protocols that are in place in our varied contexts, before we make any adjustments to our current diocesan guidelines issued last May. We therefore wish to advise you that the current diocesan guidance (18 May 2021) will remain applicable for the present time. <https://europe.anglican.org/downloads/coronavirus-guidance-for-church-officers-in-the-diocese-in-europe---revised-may-2021.pdf> We will review this position by early September and advise you then of any significant adjustments in that guidance.

The reasons for our decision are as follows:

1. Whilst infection rates do not appear to be increasing at the alarming rate observed in the UK, the EU Centre for Disease Prevention and Control does note increasing trends in cases across EU countries; and latest WHO Europe data covering the whole of our continent indicates there have been over 500,000 new confirmed cases between mid-June and mid-July. The pandemic is not over.
2. Our responsibility as Christians for our neighbour means we must take due care to protect any who may be more vulnerable than we consider ourselves to be.
3. Whilst the Church of England guidance places the responsibility for decisions about how to proceed with the incumbent (and we would assume that the incumbent would share such decision-making with the Church Council) we sense that we are not yet at the stage where most of our Chaplains would want to make such decisions, with all the risk-assessments and considerations that would be involved. Furthermore, the summer months may not be the best time to be expecting such full local consultation to take place effectively.

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4. While we maintain our present guidance, these months of summer will give us a valuable opportunity to observe the experience of the more liberal guidance in English churches.

We are deeply aware of the yearning among the people of the diocese for a return to more normal Church life and liturgical practice. We therefore will use this summer period to consider how to move forward safely. Our updated guidance in September will also take into account, as before, the expert medical advice we receive from Dr Simon Clift of Thrive Worldwide, our occupational health consultants.

We trust you will understand our more cautious and phased approach than may be the case in England. Our paramount concern is for the care, wellbeing, and safety of our clergy and communities.

This comes with our thanks for your sustained efforts to provide for the fullest expression of Church life possible in these extraordinary times.

*+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe*

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*+ David*

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