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RC DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

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Dear Father, dear Deacon, dear Religious,

We have received the following information and guidance from the Secretariat of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales. We are once again grateful to Canon Christopher Thomas and the secretariat for their help.

I hope it will be helpful for the immediate days and weeks ahead.

‘With respect to the current situation with the omicron variant it is important to ensure the following points are followed in our churches:

- That people displaying any symptoms of covid-19 should stay at home and not travel to church or participate in person.
- That hand sanitiser is available to those attending the Church.
- That there is a strong recommendation for people to wear a face covering (both nose and mouth) during the act of worship.
- That there is good ventilation and air throughput in the building; in this case, because of climatic conditions, it would be important to remind people to wrap up well in church!
- That a positive message encouraging people to get vaccinated and have the booster jab when able is delivered whenever possible.
- That people who are engaged in a form of pastoral ministry which involves ministry to the housebound, sick and vulnerable, should take regular lateral flow tests to ensure they are safe to do so. These are free from the NHS.

There is now very strong evidence to support that the main mode of transmission is through breath and nasal aerosols, and that the risk from surface and touch



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transmission is very small indeed. As such, the strict regimes of church cleaning that were recommended at the beginning of the opening of churches for public worship are no longer necessary. General church cleaning is sufficient.

If these guidance points are supported, then the churches will continue to be safe places for people to gather for acts of public worship, including over the Christmas period.

With prayerful good wishes for Advent,

Yours Devotedly in Christ,

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