

Following the announcement of fresh restrictions, including a new higher tier, a statement from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, who chairs the Church of England's Covid recovery group.



“The news of fresh restrictions in many areas will be a bitter blow,” they said.

“For many people, it will mean spending Christmas Day alone. None of us has experienced a situation quite like it in our lifetimes.

“We note the rise in infections and hospitalisations with real concern. But we also know that there is real hope. We are nearer the end of this than the beginning, with a vaccine already being made available and treatments improving.

“We recognise the increased risk we face from the coronavirus - which has already taken so many lives and has now developed a new, more easily transmissible, strain - and we recognise our duty to look out for our neighbours and protect the vulnerable.

“So, as many of us enter these new restrictions, we must commit ourselves more than ever to looking out for those who are alone, to caring for those in need and to praying for our nation and world.

“We know that public worship - both in person and through remote means - has brought comfort, hope and inspiration to so many.

“So we are grateful that, even in tier four, church buildings can be open this Christmas. But we urge everyone to take precautions and, especially for those in tier four, to be exceptionally careful.

“Even though attending public worship is permitted, many people may feel it is currently better they do not do so. Clergy and others who are shielding should certainly feel no compulsion.

“At this time of year - even this year - we celebrate the birth of Jesus with joy and hope. Jesus came to bring light that shines in the darkness.

“We need that light now and always.”

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