



20 March 2020

To: Licensed and PTO Clergy
Readers
Deanery Lay Chairs
PCC Secretaries
Churchwardens

Dear sisters and brothers,

Today, March 20th, the Church commemorates a British saint, Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. Brought up as a shepherd in the Scottish lowlands, he was called by God to be a shepherd of Christ's flock; first as abbot, then as bishop. Whilst Cuthbert remained ever a shepherd, his understanding of how to fulfil that position had to change, reflecting the changes to the focus of his ministry.

We who exercise responsibility as lay and ordained leaders in Manchester Diocese are experiencing our own shift of focus, as we seek to be God's Church in the coronavirus outbreak. Our central calling has not changed, but its expression is already very different to what it was only a few days ago. Moreover, the situation continues to change very quickly on a day by day basis.

Yesterday, I chaired a special meeting of Bishop's Leadership Team in order that we can effectively respond and support our diocese. We did not cover every aspect of change, and there will inevitably be some "rough edges" to all that we do whilst the situation is developing so rapidly. Please let us know of matters to which you feel we should pay further attention.

I am writing to you following that meeting in order to share our thinking and some of the decisions that we took.

Open for business – not business as usual

We reiterated that this is not a time for closing down our ministry and mission, but of reshaping it for very changed circumstances. For example, we want to keep our church buildings as open as they can be, perhaps even more open than usual, albeit closed for public worship. We want to continue to serve our people and our communities pastorally as best we can.

Advice/Information

The Diocesan Coronavirus Response Group has been working hard over the last few weeks to ensure that information is disseminated and advice is given in a consistent way.

We continue to ensure that our approach is consistent with the advice of the government and the Church of England.

In order to provide updated information and advice in a timely manner we are relying on the use of our website – this is updated throughout the day. I would encourage everyone to keep checking the website regularly.

Questions can be posed via the pandemic@manchester.anglican.org email account and they will be considered and dealt with as quickly as possible.

Responses will be published on our Frequently Asked Questions section of the website so that everyone across the Diocese can have access to information and advice.

With the temporary closure of Church House in response to government advice about working from home and avoiding travel there is a need to use electronic means of communication. For this reason, hard copy correspondence cannot be provided from this point forward. I would urge anyone who is not on our email distribution lists to provide their details to database@manchester.anglican.org

Emergency Structures

It is important to have a coherent structure in place in order to provide support and make decisions during this time. I have agreed with BLT that:

- A "Gold Command" Group will be established and will meet each Monday
- Bishop's Leadership Team will meet each Tuesday
- Suffragan Bishops will meet with their Archdeacons and Area Deans each Wednesday
- Area Deans are asked to convene meetings of their Chapters each Thursday (or Friday, if more convenient)

In keeping with the government advice about social distancing there is no expectation for these meetings to take place in person, and they can be "virtual" meetings. Taken together, these meetings will allow information, good practice, emerging concerns, and pastoral matters to move swiftly to where they need to be implemented and addressed.

More detail about the practical arrangements will follow in due course.

Task Groups

To support churches in the coming weeks we have also agreed to establish a number of Task Groups to focus on:

- Live Streaming
- Prayer
- Finance

Further groups are likely to follow in due course.

APCMs

Many queries have been received about APCMs and I want to take this opportunity to provide the current advice.

PARISHES WHICH HAVE NOT YET HELD THEIR MEETING OF PARISHIONERS AND APCM

- For those parishes **which have not yet held** their meeting of parishioners to elect churchwardens and APCMs to elect PCC members and deanery synod reps **the deadline has been extended from 31st May 2020 to 31st October 2020**
- The term of office for churchwardens who were chosen in 2019 **will be extended until 31st January 2021**
- The term of office of serving lay members of deanery synods is extended until 30th November

PARISHES WHICH HAVE ALREADY HELD THEIR MEETING OF PARISHIONERS AND APCM

- If parishes have already held their meeting of parishioners and APCMs the churchwardens chosen in **2019** i.e. last year will remain in office until the new wardens are admitted to office which could be as late as January 2021
- Similarly, deanery synod reps elected in 2017 (the beginning of their 3-year term of office) will continue in office until 30th November 2020 and newly elected members will take up their office on 1st December 2020.
- Newly elected members of the PCC will have already have taken up their office at the conclusion of the 2020 APCM

Finance

As we adhere to the instruction of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to suspend public acts of worship I understand the financial challenges that many parishes will now face.

I trust that parishes will continue to pay share wherever possible. Parish share continues to be, by a factor of X3, the single largest source of income that pays for our clergy and support staff.

I encourage parishes to make arrangements for regular givers in envelope schemes to pay direct into parish bank accounts by internet banking, standing orders and direct debits.

I hope that parishes who encounter major financial problems in the coming weeks will contact us at an early stage, to let us know about their situation.

Key Staff

The Government have now published the list of key workers who are entitled to have their children go to school if they cannot leave them or look after them at home. "Religious staff" are clearly identified in the list.

If schools require evidence that someone is religious staff this can be provided. Queries should be sent to HR@manchester.anglican.org

Archbishops' Letter

Even as I have been composing this letter, I have received one from our archbishops, asking that it be circulated to clergy and others. You can find a copy at <https://www.manchester.anglican.org/documents/archbishops-letter-19-march-2020/>

Many of us will have found these last few days exhausting, both emotionally and physically. I fear that will remain the case for some time. A mere absence of meetings in the diary does not of itself provide more space and comfort! We also continue to have worries and concerns for our own health and that of our loved ones, both near and far. We need to care for ourselves and for each other with a love as fierce as that with which Cuthbert cared for God's people in his monastery and diocese over 1300 years ago.

May Christ the Good shepherd, protect you and all his flock.

+David Manchester

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+David Manchester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.