



6th March 2020

The Rt Revd Dr David Walker

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

As we face the potentially serious challenges presented by the coronavirus outbreak, we recognise the vital need to take personal responsibility to follow infection control guidance. As the Body of Christ we also see this as an expression of our care for one another and the wider community.

I am writing to you about the steps that are being put in place for our diocese in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) 2019 nCOV and to confirm the current advice that has been prepared by Dr Brendan McCarthy who is the Church of England's Adviser on Health Issues.

The threat posed by Coronavirus (COVID-19) 2019 nCOV has currently been assessed by the Chief Medical Officer as 'moderate' and the risk to individuals remains low.

Information and Advice

As you will be aware, from news coverage, the situation is changing very quickly. As a result, Government advice and advice from the Church of England is being updated on a daily basis.

Our approach, in Manchester Diocese, will continue to be consistent with the advice received from the government and the Church of England.

Our diocesan website (and social media) will be updated by the communications team on a daily basis to ensure the most current information and advice is available to everyone.

I would strongly encourage every parish to nominate a person who is responsible for checking the advice on a daily basis and sharing the latest information as it becomes available.

Current Advice

Parishes should have plans in place. With this in mind I would like to take this opportunity to confirm the current advice that parishes should follow:

1. Ensure **everyone maintains good hygiene** (we should be doing this already as part of normal good practice) at all gatherings, whether services or other occasions. This includes those who prepare or serve food, those handing out books etc or having other direct physical contact with numbers of people, as well as those administering the Eucharist (see below for more guidance):

- Provide hand gel at entrances and ensure there is a good supply of soap or hand gel in cloakrooms and kitchens and any other appropriate areas
2. The best way of protecting us from spread is for everyone to use **universal good hygiene**, - this means everyone, all the time, which will effectively disrupt spread of the virus. So display the public information poster attached, which states:
 - **Catch it** – sneeze into a tissue
 - **Bin it** – bin the tissue
 - **Kill it** – wash your hands with soap and water
 - **Do not touch your face** unless you've washed your hands
 - Follow good hand washing and gel use technique
www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/
 You can also download a poster version
www.who.int/gpsc/5may/resources/posters/en/
 3. Ask **anyone with cold or flu symptoms to refrain from taking communion from the Chalice/Cup** and receive the wafer/bread/host on the hand only.
 4. **Intinction is NOT recommended**, as it is a route for transmission from the individual through handling the wafer/bread/host, and tiny fragments could affect people with allergies to gluten etc.
 5. The **placing of the wafer/host on the tongue** by anyone administering Eucharist is **NOT recommended** as it is a potential source of transmission.
 6. Ensure **good regular cleaning of surfaces people touch regularly**, including such things as door handles, light switches etc.
 7. Ask **those attending the Eucharist in particular to sanitise their hands** as they come into church, using sanitized gel dispensers (make these available in porches or entrances).
 8. Ensure **ministers of the Eucharist sanitise their hands** before and after distributing communion. This can be done by washing hands thoroughly (for 20 seconds at least with soap and water) or using good quality hand gel.
 9. In the event of increased community transmission of coronavirus, priests should take a view whether it is necessary to withdraw the Common Cup. If so they should:
 - Suspend the administration of the chalice and offer Communion in one kind only i.e. the consecrated bread/wafer/host, with the priest alone taking the wine.
 - Consider suspending handshaking or other direct physical contact during the sharing of the peace.

- o Consider suspending direct physical contact as part of a blessing or 'laying on of hands'

Where the priest has not suspended the administration of the chalice, communicants may nevertheless decide to receive in one kind only at their own discretion.

10. When **visiting parishioners at home**, wash hands before and after giving the sacraments.
11. **No pastoral visits should be undertaken to people who are self-isolating** until isolation ends. However do offer phone support.
12. **Visits to people in care homes or hospitals** should follow advice from the staff on infection control.

Further information can be found at www.churchofengland.org/coronavirus

Diocesan Coronavirus Response Group

I have set up a Diocesan Coronavirus Response Group to act as a focal point for planning and co-ordinating our response by:

- Planning interventions
- Monitoring interventions
- Ensuring information is effectively disseminated to deaneries and parishes

The Group includes:

The Ven David Sharples
Alison Moore

The Revd Canon Anne Edwards
The Revd Joanna Farnworth
The Revd Canon Stephen Williams
The Revd Dr Simon Wright
Lauren Cooke
Eve Powers

Archdeacon of Salford (Chair)
Diocesan Programme Manager
Bishop's Advisor for Healthcare
Diocesan Ecumenical Officer
Bishop's Advisor for Interfaith Issues
OLM St Mary the Virgin, Davyhulme
Diocesan HR Adviser
Diocesan Digital Communications
Officer

They met for the first time on 4 March 2020 will initially meet on a weekly basis.

As their work progresses information and advice will be shared across the diocese.

Yours ever,

