



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

AD CLERUM March 2020 (2)

Dear Friends,

I am writing to further update you on what we know as this issue escalates globally and we experience a tightening of controls in Australia to limit the spread of the virus.

UPDATE ON THE COVID-19:

- The World Health Organisation [WHO] has now declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. This has triggered a tightening of restrictions on travel and events as countries respond to increased spread and the threat of impact on populations [**NEW**];
- International Travel for business / ministry purposes should remain under very careful consideration and home isolation is likely to be required upon return. Travel Insurance Cover now carries restrictions and border closures are now more evident;
- Staff and Clergy who are unwell [for whatever reason] are asked to remain at home to reduce the risk of exposure for others;
- At present, Health Department guidelines for persons diagnosed with COVID-19 are to trace potential cross contamination and to isolate those considered at risk. In the event that a congregant member is diagnosed, this tracing activity would identify those at most risk and isolate them for a period [currently 14 days].
- In the event of a diagnosed COVID-19 case in a parish it would seem sensible to consider closure of the facility to allow deep cleaning and also to prevent the chance of infection from surface [rather than human] contact. In school settings, this closure has usually been for not more than 24 – 72 hours
- Basic hygiene remains the best deterrent. Hand washing and hygiene practices remain the best advice to avoid infection;
- Some face to face meetings may be able to be held via telephone or video conference. People feeling unwell are encouraged to dial in for face to face meetings where they are held. [**NEW**];
- Where family members or associates of clergy and staff are affected or where the potential for cross infection of COVID-19 exists, undertaking self-isolation until clearance has been provided [i.e.: the suspected case has been tested negative for COVID-19] should be the standard practice to be adopted [**NEW**];
- Where a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed and where there has been contact with that person, self-isolation is a mandatory requirement. Where work from home arrangements can be made, clergy and staff should be required to work from home for a minimum of 14 days. Where such arrangements are not possible, the leave should be

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treated as sick leave [where available] or leave with pay [if sick leave balance has been exhausted **[NEW]**];

- Implementation of social distancing measures has begun within many organisations. You may have experienced this already in respect to sporting and other fixtures. The Government has begun to implement formal restrictions on large group gatherings with a ban on group gatherings of over 500 people.
- It is prudent to consider this and the potential of further restrictions from a church / ministry context. Some consideration should be given to contingency plans in the event of increased restrictions on meeting and group gatherings. Consideration as to ways in which congregations can maintain separation from each other may also be appropriate **[NEW]**;
- Scenario planning for a possible shut down of the Anglican Centre is underway. It appears possible that measures will need to be implemented to allow a more extensive work from home regime in the near future. Parishes may want to consider scenarios where church services are curtailed or the virus disrupts the ability of the parish to function [see below]. **[NEW]**
- A webpage is being developed to assist in communicating to parishes and other ministry contexts. **[NEW]**
- Suggestions for planning ahead and providing strong leadership are included below and a contingency plan template is provided **[NEW]**.

CONSIDERATIONS IN RESPECT TO LITURGICAL PRACTICE

Based on the experience of some parishes in the Diocese, you may wish to enact the following measures as you consider an appropriate response to the coronavirus:

- Hand sanitiser at the entrance to the worship space and for communion assistants and/or the use of gloves as appropriate in preparation and cleaning.
- A greeting of the peace which does not involve a handshake.
- The use of individual communion cups (either disposable or multi-use with appropriate cleaning and sanitising protocols).
- Offer Communion in one kind only to all communicants i.e. the consecrated bread/wafer/host, with the priest alone taking the wine.
- Alternative and appropriate disposal of consecrated wine following communion, as opposed to consumption by the presiding celebrant (for example, the pouring onto consecrated church land).

Earlier advice suggested that intinction of the wafer by the presiding priest and / or distributor might be a suitable practice. Alternatively, it was also suggested that rather than taking the wine, the communicant could simply touch the base of the chalice and say "Amen". Upon reflection, the process of intinction and or contact with the chalice in the manner previously suggested is **not** encouraged. Because we now understand the ease with which

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the COVID-19 virus is transmitted, if you have previously adopted this practice we now advise that it is **no longer appropriate**. Please be guided accordingly and note this new advice. [NEW]

OTHER MINISTRY MATTERS TO CONSIDER:

- **No pastoral visits should be undertaken to people who are self-isolating** until isolation ends. However, do offer phone support.
- When **visiting parishioners at home**, wash hands before and after giving the sacraments.
- **Refrain from passing collection plates** around.
- **Wash vestments** (surplices, cassocks) on the hottest cycle you can without damaging them. Chasubles etc. which could become contaminated, may not be able to be washed. Instead, they should be securely stored away from people, ideally in a well ventilated and brightly sunlit area, for at least 48 hours before re-use,
- **Visits to people in care homes or Hospitals** should follow advice from the staff on infection control.
- Ensure **good regular cleaning of surfaces people touch regularly**, including such things as door handles, light switches etc.
- Ensure that those **serving morning tea have clean hands when setting up, handling cups and cutlery**. Keep in mind that often at morning tea, plates of biscuits or whatever are available which means people use their hands to pick them from a common plate. We urge not doing that.
- There is general concern over touching things that many people touch. Some suggest this could include money, church bulletins, prayer books, hymn books, collection plates, etc. Think carefully about maintaining clean hands for everyone with respect to these matters.

PLAN AHEAD WITH STRONG AND COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

With a strong possibility of the further spread of the virus in Victoria and drastic actions taken by the state government, we would encourage all clergy and parish councils to make some contingency plans now for future ministry

- Encourage people in your parish to give electronically. If churches cannot meet, income will plummet. This may include rental income. Can electronic giving be promoted more in your parish?
- What increased pastoral care can you offer the vulnerable in your parish, especially? Are there people who will need help buying food and medicines? Can you have a system of pastoral daily phone calls? Are there vulnerable people in your neighbourhood, not church members necessarily, who also might be helped by offers of pastoral care? A crisis like this is hopefully where Christian generosity and compassion can be seen at its best.

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- Consider contacting the frail and elderly in your parish about how best to care for them and whether they still want to come to church even now. Can more home visits and home communions be put in place for them, maintaining clean hands and communion vessels and so on?
- If large gatherings become problematic or prohibited, there may be possible ways for smaller groups to meet. Is it worth preparing leaders and materials for such groups?
- Does your church have a means of recording sermons that can be live streamed somehow to parishioners who might choose now to stay at home, or later may be forced to stay at home. If your church does, please let your bishop know. The bishops are considering offering such live-streamed ministry if churches are forcibly closed.

Church COVID-19 Continuity Plan

The Church of England have produced a helpful template to assist parishes in considering the range of issues associated with COVID-19. That document can be located at [Coronavirus Parish Continuity Plan](#) . Whilst it may need some adaption to an Australian context it does provide a range of issues to be considered in respect to continued mission and ministry. I encourage your consideration of it as a tool for planning.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Philip Freier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'P'.

The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier
Archbishop of Melbourne

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COVID-19 FACT SHEET – ISSUE #2

The following information is provided for your consideration. It is drawn from published expert material courtesy of the World Health Organisation [WHO] and from public statements from Government and Australia's Chief Medical Officer.

SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS [COVID-19]

The virus appears to start with a **fever**, followed by a **dry cough**, then after a week, **shortness of breath** and some patients have needed hospital treatment. Notably, the infection rarely seems to cause a runny nose or sneezing. But in more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death. [Source WHO].

The table below of symptoms may help **[NEW]**

ARE THOSE SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS, FLU, COLD OR ALLERGIES?

All four illnesses can share similar symptoms, but there are signs that can tell you which one you may actually have.

For example, the common cold rarely produces a fever, unlike the flu and the coronavirus.

Conversely, sneezing is not a symptom of the flu and coronavirus, like it is for the cold and allergies.

If in doubt, stay home. Please tell a friend or family member that you are self-isolating so that we can keep in touch with you.

Symptoms	Coronavirus (symptoms range from mild to severe)	Flu (abrupt onset of symptoms)	Cold (gradual onset of symptoms)	Airborne Allergies
Fever	Common	Common	Rare	No
Fatigue	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common (usually dry)	Mild	Sometimes
Sneezing	No	No	Common	Common
Aches and Pains	Sometimes	Common	Common	No
Runny or Stuffy Nose	Rare	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Diarrhoea	Rare	Sometimes for children	No	
Headaches	Sometimes	Common	Rare	
Shortness of Breath	Sometimes	No	No	

Table: David Raynor Source: [World Health Organization, Center for Disease Control and Afrin](#) [Get the data](#)
Downloaded 12 March from News and Observer article published 10 March 2020. <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article241053996.html>

REDUCING THE RISK OF COVID-19 INFECTION

WHO advises that personal hygiene, especially washing hands with soap and water or alcohol rub, is very important. In addition, WHO advises to avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections and to wash hands regularly, especially after direct contact with ill people or their environment.

Those with symptoms should practise "cough etiquette", including maintaining distance, covering coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or the inside of an elbow, and washing hands.

WHAT'S THE GOVERNMENT DOING?

Australia declared coronavirus a "disease of pandemic potential" on January 21, Health Minister Greg Hunt says.

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That triggered:

- The activation of a **National Incident Response Centre**, to coordinate Australia's response;
- The release of masks and other medical equipment from a **national medical stockpile**; and
- AUSMAT — the **Australian Medical Assistance Team** — being called in. Doctors and nurses from the team have been based with quarantined travellers on Christmas Island and near Darwin as well as accompanying evacuation flights from China.

Last week, the Government published its [Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus](#). It outlines actions that could be taken in response to a pandemic [were that declared], including:

- **Cancelling large gatherings**
- Asking people to **work from home**
- Boosting the **capability of hospitals** to deal with an increased demand for services, such as increasing intensive care beds

The plan says these measures should be implemented "at a level appropriate for a disease of moderately high impact", because doing too little could have significant consequences.

Under the plan, state and territory governments are responsible for:

- the operation of **public health responses**
- undertaking "**contact tracing**" — that is, identifying people exposed to those who are infected, and following up with them
- coordinating the **distribution of antiviral drugs**
- bringing in "**social distancing**" measures (which could include closing schools and workplaces, quarantining people, cancelling events and even shutting down public transport)
- implementing **infection control guidelines** and healthcare safety and quality standards

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