



**From:** Bishop of Exeter  
**Sent:** 19 March 2020 16:17  
**To:** Licensed Clergy, PtO Clergy, Readers, Churchwardens & Lay Chairs  
**Subject:** Ad Clerum - Coronavirus Update 6

## **TO ALL LICENSED CLERGY, PTO CLERGY, READERS, CHURCHWARDENS & LAY CHAIRS**

### **AD CLERUM Update 6**

19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Colleagues

Events are moving quickly, first with the suspension of all Public Worship and now with the closure of schools. Fresh Guidance is being issued by the Government on an almost daily basis and I will endeavour to update you to the best of my ability, but in this fast moving situation, I would ask you to check *both* the [Church of England's national website](#) and our [Diocesan website](#) on a regular basis so that you are properly informed.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

The senior staff team is meeting online regularly to review the situation and to offer advice wherever we can. Please find attached to this email a document with a comprehensive set of FAQs, which the Archdeacons have drawn up in conjunction with the Diocesan Registrar, including legal advice about weddings and the calling of banns. Where we are able to give definitive answers, they are included. There are some aspects, such as arrangements for APCMs, that we are still awaiting national guidance. If you have to make a decision about a pressing matter that is not covered and do not know what to do, then contact one of the Archdeacons by email or phone. However, please check the diocesan website *first* because it is updated constantly.

### **Funerals**

Please find attached National Guidance in relation to funerals. The Archdeacons have explained the local situation in Devon in their FAQs.

### **Retired Clergy**

I have written today to all retired clergy in the Diocese to express our support and concern. It is important that those over the age of 70 with Permission to Officiate should step back from face to face pastoral ministry, including officiating at funerals and memorial services, in line with the Government's advice. Please do not approach them to officiate for the foreseeable future, so that they do not feel under any pressure to help out.

**The Palace, Exeter EX1 1HY Tel: 01392 272362**

The same applies to those under the age of 70 with Permission to Officiate who have an underlying health condition which makes them vulnerable. People's well-being and safety is paramount.

### **Worship and Prayer**

Although public worship has been suspended, the worship of God has not been suspended. Our strong suggestion is that clergy, readers and lay leaders of worship should stick to the normal pattern of visits to churches on Sunday at the usual times. They should offer worship alone and invite members of the congregation to pray at the same time at home. In some cases, it may be possible to livestream so that parishioners can join in. Some churches are putting their service sheets online and emailing them so that everyone can be included. Staying within the Government's advice, instead of focusing on what we can't do, let's think about what we can do.

If you are looking for a form of prayer to use at home, you may choose the Church of England Daily Prayer App or access it via the Church of England [website](#). We also have various links and resources for worship and prayer at home, plus tips on livestreaming on our website: <https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/coronavirus-guidance/coronavirus-resources/>

### **Worship on the Diocesan Website**

We all need to think creatively and imaginatively about sustaining the life of prayer in our communities during this crisis. Each day at 11am, there will be a short video reflection entitled 'Pause and Pray' posted on social media and the website. Over the coming weeks, we will also be posting acts of worship for Sundays, the Maundy Thursday Christ Eucharist, Good Friday and Easter Day. You will be able to view them from 10am on our [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) Channels and they will be uploaded to the Diocese of Exeter website.

### **Mothering Sunday**

A brief Mothering Sunday service was filmed this morning with Bishop Jackie. It will be uploaded on the website on Sunday with a copy of the order of service. This Sunday churches of all denominations across the country will also be joining in a [national day of prayer and action](#). As part of this, everyone is encouraged to light a candle and place it in the front window of their home at 7.00pm.

### **Spiritual Communion**

Holy Week and Easter are special times in the life of every Christian when we endeavour to receive holy communion. That will not be possible this year. The term 'Spiritual Communion' has been used historically to describe the means of grace by which a person, prevented for some serious reason from sharing in a celebration of the Eucharist, nonetheless shares in the communion of Jesus Christ. A form of prayer for this is also attached to this email.

### **Community Action**

It has been wonderful to see an abundance of community initiatives has sprung up as people seek to support those around them. It is good that congregations are keen to do all that they can to support their local community. This is indeed a time when the Church should be at the vanguard of action, reaching out to those in need with generosity. However, before

starting or encouraging an initiative, can I encourage you to check the [community support page on the website](#). This will ensure that you are not duplicating effort and following best practice. Do email the Communications Team with any good ideas you have via [communications@exeter.anglican.org](mailto:communications@exeter.anglican.org)

### **Hospitals**

Our surgeries and hospitals are coming under increasing pressure as this pandemic reaches its peak of infection. We need to work in close collaboration with our network of healthcare chaplains as never before and support them with our prayer. Attached to this email is a letter from Simon Harrison, the lead Chaplain at the RD&E, who is also President of Health Care Chaplains in the UK.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples 'not to worry about your life... but first to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well' (Matthew 6.33). It is hard not to worry in the current circumstances, but we endeavour to walk by faith, casting all our anxieties upon God, knowing that God cares about us (1 Peter 5.7). As Jesus wisely says, 'Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will bring worries enough of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today'.

Bishop Nick and Bishop Jackie join me in sending you their prayerful greetings. May God bless us all with his peace at this time.

+ Robert Exon