



## AD CLERUM Update 7

24<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Colleagues

The Prime Minister announced in his broadcast last night that the sharp rise in infection rates has led the Government to impose severe restrictions on all gatherings and to discourage all unnecessary travelling in order to curtail the spread of the virus. The Archbishop of Canterbury has decided to postpone the Lambeth Conference to 2021 and **all church buildings are now closed with immediate effect until further notice**. Our cathedral and churches will no longer be open even for private prayer, and there will be no baptisms or weddings. I will be writing to you separately about funerals later in the week. The Archbishops ask us 'to continue to pray, to love, to care for the vulnerable, and to build our communities, even while separated.' Please see the full text of the Archbishops' letter attached to this email.

Please place a notice to this effect on your church website and on the **doors** of your church, explaining how people can join the church in worship and prayer, even though they cannot have access to the building. A template for this notice is available to download on the diocesan website

<https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/coronavirus-guidance/coronavirus-resources/>

**Church websites** are more important than ever as a way of communicating with local communities and helping people to stay connected. Please ensure your website is up to date with a message on the home page about your church(es) currently being closed for public worship due to Coronavirus. It would also be helpful to publish a phone number people can ring if they need practical or pastoral support, and to signpost spiritual resources for them to access as we journey through this national emergency.

If you need help or advice about how to make the most of your website, please contact the Diocese Communications Team: [communications@exeter.anglican.org](mailto:communications@exeter.anglican.org)

You could also join our new Diocese Digital & Communications Facebook group where you will discover lots of people who can help with technical questions about websites:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/195948338281852/?source\\_id=394793003931439](https://www.facebook.com/groups/195948338281852/?source_id=394793003931439)

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Fresh Guidance is being issued by the Government on a daily basis and, in this fast moving situation, it is important that you check *both* the [Church of England's national website](#) and our [Diocesan website](#) on a regular basis so that you are properly informed. In particular, check out the **FAQs** which we update regularly. This now includes information about APCMs, churchwardens and electoral rolls.

## School Closures

Although the Government closed schools last week, it has asked schools and childcare providers to continue to provide care for a limited number of children, including those whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and who cannot be cared for safely at home. It has now published a list of categories of workers whose children will be prioritised, including those of some parish clergy and chaplains, particularly with regard to ensuring funeral provision. Please read the attached **Key Workers Briefing** prepared by our Diocesan Director of Education in case it applies to you.

## Worship and Prayer

Last Sunday represented a digital milestone in the life of the Church as many clergy and churches live-streamed worship to their parishioners to the best of their ability. It was a wonderful testament to human creativity and to our faith in God who is indeed 'our refuge and strength: a very present help in trouble' (Psalm 46.1). The diocesan website has various links and resources for worship and prayer at home, plus tips on livestreaming: <https://exeter.anglican.org/resources/coronavirus-guidance/coronavirus-resources/>.

The national Church of England website also offers advice about HOW to livestream: a digital tutorial for novices! <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

If you do livestream, please remember that from now on this can only be done from your home. Do remember to post your event on the 'A Church Near You' website so that people can find you online. [https://www.achurchnearyou.com/live-stream/?tags=Live\\_stream](https://www.achurchnearyou.com/live-stream/?tags=Live_stream)

## Sundays @ 7pm

Lighting a candle every Sunday evening at 7pm during this crisis and putting it in your window will be a sign of our solidarity and hope in the light of Jesus Christ that can never be extinguished. This coming Sunday our prayers will be directed in support of our fantastic NHS and the hard-working professionals and volunteers who are maintaining our nation's network of medical and social care. A short reflection by Prebendary Jackie Taylor, Dean for Women in Ministry, will be posted on the Diocesan website to help focus our prayer.

## What will be developed in the weeks ahead?

In the days and weeks ahead, we will continue to expand our digital output locally and nationally and you will be able to access these through the diocesan website

- More video content– this will include video services and more films for Holy Week and Easter. In addition, we will make Holy Week audio content available.
- A series of new reflections from Easter Day onwards – work is underway on an updated app, audio and email resources. More details to follow soon.
- Mental health reflections –daily reflections to help people, especially at a time when they are feeling lonely, isolated or anxious.

## Mental Health and Well-being

At this stressful time, it is vitally important that we look after ourselves and one another; otherwise we are not going to be able to care for the frightened, the sick and the dying. Please look at the national guidance about self-care and building resilience:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Guidance%20on%20mental%20health%20and%20wellbeing%20and%20Coronaviruses.pdf>

Please also read the short paper on **Trauma and self-care** (attached) compiled by the research team at Exeter University: Dr Christopher Southgate, Carla Grosch-Miller and Hilary Ison. Deanery Chapters come into their own at these times and I have asked Rural Deans and Lay Chairs to keep the Archdeacons, and through them the Bishops, informed on a weekly basis about any member of the clergy, reader or church officer who becomes ill or is in difficulty. I commend to you the collect for the Fourth Sunday before Lent:

O God, you know us to be set  
in the midst of so many and great dangers,  
that by reason of the frailty of our nature  
we cannot always stand upright:  
grant to us such strength and protection  
as may support us in all dangers  
and carry us through all temptations;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Each night before I go to sleep, I am praying a prayer of the Church of South India. I commend that to you as well as together we endeavour to place ourselves, our families and friends in God's hands.

God our Father, by whose mercy  
the world turns safely into darkness and returns again to light:  
we place in your hands our unfinished tasks,  
our unsolved problems, and our unfulfilled hopes,  
knowing that only what you bless will prosper.  
To your love and protection  
we commit each other and all those we love,  
knowing that you alone are our sure defender,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

May God keep us all safe in his strong and tender love.

+ Robert Exon