

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PARISH CONTINUITY PLAN

[Name] Parish/Benefice

The Diocese of XX requests that each parish/benefice/mission community or alternative now puts in place a continuity plan in preparedness for further development of the Coronavirus situation.

The list below is not exhaustive, neither is this a 'one size to fit all' plan. Please use this document to put together an appropriate bespoke plan for your situation. A check list of actions is available at the back of this document. There is also guidance available from the National Church of England: <https://www.churchofengland.org/coronavirus>.

There are many unknowns about the development of this virus over the coming weeks and months; your plan will need to be revisited and kept under review as circumstances change.

Please do give this task urgent attention, and when completed, share a copy with your Rural / Area Dean; please include your list, with contact details, of all your clergy and LLMs.

1. Infrastructure

The aim of this plan is to ensure as far as possible the continued mission and ministry of parishes, and the maintenance of the critical ongoing business of the parish.

The Incumbent, with the support of the Church Wardens, is requested to now take steps to prepare for the possibility of Coronavirus becoming a pandemic.

The Incumbent's nominated deputy is the [2nd Name]. The [3rd Name] will fulfil this role should [1st and 2nd name] be unwell.

The Incumbent, or his/her nominated deputy, will provide a channel for regular communication, by email or phone, with the Rural / Area Dean and Archdeacon as requested.

1.1 The Incumbent and deputies will have emergency contact details for the Rural / Area Dean and the Rural / Area Dean's deputy.

1.2 Identify critical leadership roles and essential parish and benefice functions.

1.3 Where possible, cross-train people for essential tasks in the parish so that if a person needs to self-isolate or becomes ill, tasks can still be undertaken.

2. Communication

2.1 Parish/Benefice/Mission Community Offices, or incumbent and the Churchwardens must have contact details of:

- a. Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers who are available for ministry, occasional offices and pastoral care,
- b. those involved in services and other church activities.

2.2 Consideration should be given regarding how best to communicate information about the outbreak and any appropriate advice, via notice boards, news sheets, email and through social media as appropriate. Church leaders can play a key role in addressing rumours, misinformation, fear and anxiety.

3. General Hygiene

3.1 Alcohol-based hand-sanitiser (minimum alcohol content 60%), or appropriate hand washing facilities in the event of a shortage of sanitisers should be available at the entrance to the church, with Notices and Welcomes encouraging community and visitors to use on entry. Baby wipes are not a satisfactory alternative.

3.2 Tissues and bin provided at church entrance

3.23.3 Notices/posters should be displayed to remind people of the general hygiene advice. Examples can be found at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/catch-bin-kill.pdf>.

3.33.4 Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces as per government guidance.

3.43.5 Paper towels only to be used in the toilet, and for drying communion vessels.

3.6 Consider such things as stopping passing the collection plate around, and the use of single issue service sheets etc

4. Worship

As far as possible, all services will continue to be held as usual, in accordance with the guidance or instruction of Government, the national Church and the Diocese. Guidance for worship may change as the situation develops. Clergy and Church Wardens should keep abreast of communications coming from the Diocese, National Church and Public Health England.

4.1 Consider alternate ways to offer worship and spiritual support to individuals and your community in the event that we move to further social distancing measures and the numbers in self-isolation increase. In such a situation, anxiety levels will rise and people will be looking for spiritual resources accessible at home to help them. Parishes should give consideration to the preparation of resources for parishioners, including those without internet access. The Church of England offers online resources and we expect these resources to be added to in due course: <https://www.churchofengland.org/coronavirus>.

4.2 Daily prayers can help give structure to our days for those who are housebound with more time for thinking and reflecting. You may wish to consider signposting people to the online Common Worship, Daily Prayer resources and to produce local booklets to offer as *personal copies only* (please do not pass these around).

4.3 Copies of prayers for the sick and the dying and also a copy of the funeral service could be helpfully sent to those unable to attend the funeral of a friend or relative.

4.4 Setting up regular prayer times and using the church bell to sound the times of prayer, use of online conferencing facilities such as Skype, telephone prayer partners, could positively help to establish a sense of corporate prayer and the strengthening of the praying community.

5. Pastoral

Clergy can offer an important public reassurance through ‘the sacrament of presence’ and being seen to be “present” and available. *This does not include physically visiting those diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who are self-isolating*: clergy need to protect themselves and others, making sure they adhere to hygiene precautions

They can also be a trusted voice in a community and help with the distribution of government advice ensuring isolated members of the community are aware of the precautions they can take.

5.1 Check Church First Aid Kits and availability of trained first aid people.

5.2 Network as appropriate with local health, welfare, safety networks, funeral directors and other service providers. Ensure contact details for these service providers are held by key parish leadership. Be aware of local information and peculiarities e.g. changes in public utilities or services that affect your community specifically.

5.3 Develop a plan for the pastoral and practical support of those who are vulnerable or housebound in the parish (the plan must of course adhere to safeguarding policies and hygiene practices).

5.4 For those who need to self-isolate, consider how people can be supported with phone calls and via social media, and helped with the delivery of shopping and / or medication. It is very important that all church members involved in such support are very clear on and committed to adhering to the Government's isolation and general hygiene advice.

- You may want to consider offering to hold next of kin details for parishioners who live alone, but make sure any such personal information is stored securely and you have the individual's permission to have these details in keeping with General Data Protection regulations.

5.5 Identify and brief lay people who can provide telephone support and prayer for those who are fearful or otherwise distressed.

6. Activities

6.1 Each church group should consider what action must be taken in the event of key people not being available to run the activity. The following should be considered:

- maintaining an up to date list of contact details for the group
- deciding at what point the activity will be cancelled
- decide how members of the group will be kept informed
- nominate at least one person to be responsible for hygiene
- notify the Parish Office or Churchwardens of decisions made in this context.

6.2 Determine the potential impact of outside agencies no longer being able to resource or serve the work of the parish church (e.g. suppliers and service providers)

7. Finance

7.1 There should be at least one other person, as well as the Treasurer, who is familiar with the church accounts, gift aid and regular giving and is able to administer them appropriately - this may include banking authorisation

7.2 If a large proportion of your income comes from cash collections at services, consider how you might manage cash flow during a period of time when fewer people are coming to church or church gatherings cease.

7.3 Anyone handling cash should protect themselves from virus transmission by washing hands or using hand gel beforehand and afterwards, or by wearing appropriate gloves.

The Reverend [Name]

[Names]

Incumbent

Church Wardens

[Date] 2020

	Check List for XXX Parish/Benefice	Date completed/reviewed and by whom
1	Infrastructure	
1.1	The Incumbent and deputies will have emergency contact details for the Rural / Area Dean and the Rural / Area Dean's deputy.	
1.2	Identify critical leadership roles and essential parish and benefice functions.	
1.3	Cross-train people for essential tasks in the parish	
2	Communication	
2.1	Parish/Benefice/Mission Community Offices, or incumbent and the Churchwardens will have contact details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers who are available for ministry, occasional offices and pastoral care, b. those involved in services and other church activities. 	
2.2	Consider how to communicate information about the outbreak and any appropriate advice	
3.	General hygiene	
3.1	Alcohol-based hand-sanitiser, or appropriate hand washing should be available at the entrance to the church, with Notices	
3.2	Tissues and bin provided by church entrance	
3.3	Notices/posters should be displayed to remind people of the general hygiene advice	
3.4	Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces as per government guidance.	
3.5	Paper towels only to be used in the toilet, and for drying communion vessels.	

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3.7	Consider such things as stopping passing the collection plate around, use of single issue service sheets etc	
4.	Worship	
4.1	Consider alternate ways to offer worship and spiritual support to individuals and your community	
5.	Pastoral	
5.1	Check Church First Aid Kits and availability of trained first aid people	
5.2	Network as appropriate with local key service providers. Ensure contact details for these service providers are held by key parish leadership.	
5.3	Develop a plan for the pastoral and practical support of those who are vulnerable or housebound in the parish	
5.4	For those who need to self-isolate, consider how people can be supported	
5.5	Identify and brief lay people who can provide telephone support and prayer for those who are fearful or otherwise distressed.	
6.	Activities	
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6.2	Determine the potential impact of outside agencies no longer being able to resource or serve the work of the parish church (e.g. suppliers	
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7.2	Consider how you might manage cash flow	
7.3	Anyone handling cash should protect themselves by appropriate hand hygiene	