

SECOND CORONA VIRUS UPDATE

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

With the increasing concern around the spread of the Coronavirus, our church communities need to act as responsibly as possible to maintain confidence and unity and to minimise any opportunity for the spread of infection. We act in the Spirit of Jesus, who shows compassion to those who are anxious and hurting and who will one day make all things new.

The following guidelines and directions will be helpful to encourage confidence in our community practices.

What is Coronavirus?

The word coronavirus refers to a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. In December 2019 a new strain not previously identified in humans was first reported in Wuhan, China. This novel coronavirus disease has now officially been called COVID-19 by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Symptoms of this virus range from a mild cough to pneumonia, with the virus being spread from person to person. It takes between 2 and 10 days before people who are infected become sick and develop a fever and show symptoms of the virus.

Managing the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The current outbreak of the COVID-19 strain of coronavirus was first reported from Wuhan, China on 31st December 2019.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), and the Australian Government, Department of Health are continuing to expand their knowledge and advise on this new virus (officially called COVID-19) to provide individual's worldwide with advice on measures to protect their health and reduce the spread of this outbreak.

Businesses are required to identify hazards, and their associated risks, in the workplace and take reasonable action to eliminate or minimise the risk when elimination is not possible. This includes preventing exposure to widespread acute respiratory illnesses, including the coronavirus.

The information provided here is the basis of advice provided to Agencies of the Diocese. The objective was to outline what the coronavirus is, how individuals can protect themselves and some recommended strategies for employers to use.

How to Protect Yourself?

If you feel unwell, stay at home, do not attend church, work or school. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.

Seek medical advice following current guidelines: www.health.gov.au

As with all viruses, the Department of Health recommend practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene to reduce the risk of spreading.

Good hand hygiene

Wash your hands frequently using soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub to eliminate the virus on your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. This is particularly important after taking public transport.

Good respiratory hygiene

Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, discard tissues immediately and clean your hands.

LITURGICAL PRACTICE AND THE CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19)

The WHO has now declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic which informs these directions as to how we must act.

Given the increasing concern around the spread of COVID-19, two of the primary concerns of the Anglican Communion remain around the partaking of the Common Cup and the Exchange of the Greeting of Peace.

Long-standing government advice has been that 'In a pandemic, it makes good sense to take precautions to limit the spread of disease by **not** sharing common vessels for food and drink.'

In recent days the Church of England has issued guidance suspending the use of the Common Cup.

Intinction is not recommended (even by celebrants or communion-administrators) as this represents an infection transmission route as well as a risk to those with certain allergies.

Directions:

- **Until further notice ministry units are asked to cease intinction.**
- **Until further notice ministry units are asked to cease use of the Common Cup.**
- **Where individuals cups are used gloves should be worn by those preparing the cups. Cups must be passed individually to congregation members by servers who have first washed their hands with an appropriate alcohol-based sanitiser. Trays of cups should not be passed between congregation members nor should congregation members pick up cups from a tray. After use, single use Individual Cups should be disposed.**
- **In all services of Holy Communion congregation members should be assured that if they receive communion in one kind (bread) only, they can be confident that by faith they will receive all the benefits of partaking in the Holy Communion.**

Shaking hands at the exchange of the Peace

Given the level of apprehension among many parishioners, it is advisable at this time to avoid shaking hands during the peace. A friendly nod and a smile can convey the same greeting. It is important that congregations be given clear and 'non-anxious' direction about this so as to avoid unnecessary confusion and concern.

Direction:

- **Until further notice ministry units are asked to refrain from the shaking of hands at the Greeting of Peace. It is suggested that celebrants make this clear at the appropriate**

point in the liturgy with words to the effect of “As an expression of our care for each other we will not be shaking hands at this point. You are most welcome to share Christ’s peace with each other through a friendly nod and smile.”

General Directions

- **Churches should have hand-sanitisers available for parishioners to use e.g. by placing them near the entrance or where refreshments are served.**
- **Prior to communion, all personnel involved in administering the elements should wash their hands with an alcohol-based (minimum 60%) hand-sanitiser.**

Diocesan agency response

Diocesan agencies have responded to these events principally via the advice of their professional subscriber organisations such as the Association of Independent Schools, the universities and to guides supplied by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

For schools, recommendations have been made on the adoption of the 14 day quarantining periods. This has been implemented.

Notifications to agencies have further involved:

- Providing information to staff that has been obtained from reputable and reliable sources to reduce any potential hysteria or fear around the outbreak.
- Encouraging staff to practice good hand and respiratory hygiene by providing adequate soap or alcohol-based hand rub in the workspace especially in bathrooms, kitchens, waiting areas or other commonly used areas.
- Placing information that encourages good hand and respiratory hygiene at the entrance to workplaces, or in other areas likely to be seen.
- Paying attention to travel warnings and if recommended considering adjusting staff travel to countries with high rates of infection.
- Ensuring sick leave policies are consistent with recommended guidelines, and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Maintaining flexible policies where possible that permit quarantined employees, or those required to stay home to care for a family member suspected of being infected from coronavirus, to access paid leave where possible or work from home. No advice of staff being affected has been received.
- Performing routine environmental cleaning and providing disposable wipes for commonly used surfaces such as keyboards, remotes, phone handsets.
- If an employee or their family member is sick with coronavirus, support the employee to apply for leave or work-from-home if their role permits. No such advice has been received.
- If an employee is stuck overseas assist them to access adequate resources including overseas medical care, and offer the company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for phone-based counselling support. No such advice has been received.
- All workers are provided with access to the EAP for support.

Most importantly, remember that God is good and gracious, and that times of challenge provide an ideal opportunity for us to display our confidence in Christ and our care for each other. You may find the following prayer, prepared by the Diocese of Melbourne helpful at this time:

*Lord Jesus Christ, healer and friend,
come and care for all of us
through the danger and uncertainty
of the coronavirus epidemic.*

*To people who are sick, bring healing.
To people who are displaced, isolated,
or cut off from family, friends or work,
bring comfort and companionship.*

*Work with medical staff as they care for the sick,
and protect them from harm.
Give skill and fruitful research to scientists
as they work on treatments and a vaccine.
To public health authorities, give wisdom
to decide the best ways to manage
both this crisis and our anxieties.*

*When communities are fearful,
give a calm spirit,
and kindness to neighbours and strangers.
Through this testing time,
and through all the risks we face together,
teach us once again how we can love one another
as you have loved us. Amen*

Please ensure that this information is provided to all key personnel within your ministry unit including lay people.

If you have any further questions please contact the ADS Director of Risk and Compliance on 0412 287 706 or email: andrew.guile@anglicands.org.au

Grace and Peace, and prayers for a holy Lent.

+ Mark and + Carol

12 March 2020