



Church in Wales guidance note

Subject: Coronavirus (Covid-19) guidance
Date: February 2020

Prayer

Pray for those infected by the new coronavirus, (now renamed Covid-19 by WHO), in China and around the world, for those who care for them, for health specialists and authorities who are combatting the spread of infection, and of course for all who at this time are feeling anxious, especially for those with friends and family in China.

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

The World Health Organization has declared that this is a public health emergency of international concern. This enables resources to be targeted at countries which have a weak public health infrastructure. The risk to the public in the UK is currently set at moderate, but for individuals at LOW. This permits the government to plan for all eventualities. The number of cases in the UK is very small and good preparation is in place.

Most people recover from the illness after experiencing heavy cold / flu like symptoms for 6 – 8 days, but Covid-19 is not flu and no vaccine is available. It is now being understood that death rates are much lower than was first thought – initially only the serious cases were reported, and not the ones that just seemed like flu. Deaths are most likely to occur where there is a pre-existing condition.

Public health advice is published at

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public?utm_source=7399ccdc-5d7d-431f-9f69-08a990ebb8f2&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

This paper offers advice to churches. **There is no immediate risk or need for action, but it is as well to be prepared for what we hope and expect will not happen.**

What to do now

If someone is ill either call 111 or NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47. Do not soldier on. This will help prevent the spread of disease. Those who are assessed as being at risk (which currently means those who have travelled back from a number of Far Eastern countries the last 14 days) are asked to self isolate at home while tests are done.

Keep an eye on the daily updates from official sources, not the heightened concerns sometimes seen in the media.

Visiting

Pastoral visitors to homes and hospitals should observe all precautions in personal hygiene before and after such visits.

Holy Communion

While it is our faith that the sacraments are means of grace and not of sickness, they are physically ministered, and we should take physical care. As well as the specific concern about Coronavirus, this advice is generally applicable for all infectious disease.

1. **Wash Hands.** Priests presiding at the Eucharist, communion administrators and servers are reminded to wash hands. We strongly advise the use of hand sanitizers immediately before the Preparation of the Table and Eucharistic prayer.
2. **Do not intinct, or allow intinction.** Because hands can be as much a source of pathogens as lips, intinction is no safer than drinking and can introduce germs into the cup. Intinction (dipping the bread into the wine) can also threaten those with certain immune or allergic conditions. For instance, those with gluten intolerance for whom traces of gluten can be hazardous are at greater risk when other communicants have dipped their communion wafer into the wine.
3. **Invite your congregations to consider receiving Holy Communion in one Kind.** It is Anglican teaching that to receive the sacrament in one kind only (ie. just the bread) is to receive the sacrament in its entirety. The celebrant should always receive from the Chalice. Should a communicant feel ill or not wish to drink from the chalice then he or she ought to receive the consecrated bread alone. *There is no need at this stage however to cease offering the chalice to the congregation.*
4. **Give guidance on the Sharing of the Peace.** *At this time there is no need to refrain from sharing the Peace.* Possibly further advice will need to be given were the virus to spread widely in the UK. However, when we exchange the Peace we express our desire to come to the holy table as a community which has been reconciled to God and one another through the work of Christ, and whose members are 'in love and charity' with our neighbours. Although customary in many churches, handshakes or other physical touching are not therefore required at this point and, if people are concerned about these, it is enough simply to say 'peace be with you', preferably whilst making eye contact.

Adapted from guidance issued by the Diocese of London, with thanks.
Bench of Bishops, February 2020.