

Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for parishes

The threat posed by COVID-19 has been assessed by the Chief Medical Officer as 'moderate'. This permits the Government to plan for all eventualities. The risk to individuals remains low.

Current Government advice is that individuals should follow good hygiene practices including:

- carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, and binning the tissue;
- washing hands with soap and water (for 20 seconds) or using sanitiser gel to kill germs.

Advice has also been issued to travellers who have returned to the UK from a number of countries.

Anyone who has returned to the UK from has travelled to the UK from mainland China, Thailand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia or Macau in the last 14 days and develops symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath, should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu;
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the country.

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.' COVID-19 has **NOT** been declared a pandemic.

Churches *should already be following best-hygiene practices* that include advising parishioners with coughs and sneezes to refrain from handshaking during The Peace and to receive Communion in one kind only.

At present, there is no Government advice that suggests the use of the Common Cup should be suspended.

It is also best practice for churches to have hand-sanitisers available for parishioners to use.

In addition, priests presiding at the Eucharist, communion administrators and servers should wash their hands, preferably with an alcohol-based (minimum 60%) hand-sanitiser.

Intinction is not recommended (even by celebrants or communion-administrators) as this represents an infection transmission route.

Best hygiene practice should continue to be observed in all pastoral contacts.

Updated advice from Public Health England on Monday 17th February 2020

Whilst in places of worship there is no need to avoid other worshipers who are well. Take usual infection prevention precautions including washing your hands or using hand sanitiser (containing at least 60% alcohol) after using the toilet facilities; before eating food or snacks or if you are in close contact with someone who is unwell.

Everyone can help to reduce the spread of viruses in the following ways:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. 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.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- If you feel unwell, stay at home, do not attend work or school.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home and work environment.

Information from CofE website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-parishes>

Parishes should check this link regularly for updated guidance.