



17 March 2020

To: Licensed and PTO Clergy
Readers
Deanery Lay Chairs
PCC Secretaries
Churchwardens

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today, the archbishops of Canterbury and York, with the support of their fellow bishops, have issued fresh guidance regarding the coronavirus outbreak. Over the coming weeks, the Church of England will be very much “open for business” but it will not be “business as usual”. We will pray, and we will serve our communities, loving God and our neighbour, but we should not seek to gather in our customary numbers.

We will need to ensure that those who are “self-isolating”, including our own congregants, do not become isolated and cut off from wider society. Many good ideas as to how to do this are already bubbling up as local people respond imaginatively to the present context. We can share best practice and learn from one another.

We will need to find the best ways to allow crucial parts of our service of our neighbours- such as food banks and winter night shelters - to continue.

Our churches will be open where possible, whilst discouraging gatherings that place individuals closer together than the distance specified in government advice. They will be places of prayer, and of comfort. The prayers of the clergy, offered each day through Morning and Evening Prayer, and accompanied from home by many others using the Daily Prayer app, will support us all. However, **no public worship services will be taking place for the time being.**

Where possible acts of worship will be streamed, or made available on the Internet; sermons and prayers can be placed on websites and social media pages. The BBC will continue to broadcast the Daily Service at 0945 each morning on Long Wave, digital, and via BBC Sounds. They will also broadcast Choral Evensong and Sunday Worship at the usual times. Songs of Praise will provide a TV outlet for joining in worship.

There will be many areas of change, especially matters of detail, not covered yet in the Guidance being produced. Colleagues in the National Church Institutions, in collaboration with government and others, are working to provide advice to cover as wide a range of questions as possible. Please be patient if the query you have is not capable of an instant answer.

In the coming weeks, matters will continue to change, perhaps in ways we cannot as yet predict. What remains unchanging is God's unfailing love for us, shown in Jesus Christ, who himself went through the pains of suffering and death for our sake. As St Paul assures us, nothing can separate us from that love. Love God, love one another. Pray for each other, and pray also for us, your bishops.

+David Manchester
+Mark Bolton
+Mark Middleton

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name 'David Manchester' in a cursive script.