

COVID-19 A New Way Of Doing And Being Church

ADVICE FOR LEADERSHIP

There is work to do to maintain and develop connectedness among parishioners by other means than our familiar patterns of services in churches, meetings in halls and homes, and visits to homes and hospitals.

This period of enforced “stay at home” is also an unexpected Sabbath – a period in which we might rest, paint the house, tidy the garage, read some books we never find time for and practice our musical skills (other members of the household permitting).

SUSPENSION OF WORSHIP SERVICES AND CLOSURE OF CHURCHES

After Sunday 22 March, all services of public worship are suspended until further notice.

Q: Does this mean our churches are ‘out of bounds’?

A: Yes. In keeping with the letter and the spirit of the government’s request that we “stay at home” our churches are to be closed.

NEW WAYS OF WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

The suspension of worship services as events in which people meet physically in a church building does not mean the end of worshipping together.

Many parishes are going to be using modern technology to livestream worship led by their vicar or priest in charge. Some parishes will encourage people to pray and praise God in their own homes but at the same time each Sunday morning.

Some parishes will encourage daily times of common prayer. In the Diocese of Christchurch, if you cannot access local opportunities made available by your parish, we recommend joining regular worship livestreamed from the Transitional Cathedral.

Q: Holy Week and Easter are approaching. What planning should we do?

A: It would be wise to consider how your community might mark Holy Week and celebrate Easter without physically gathering. In what ways might people journey through Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday within their own homes? Are their readings and prayers to supply? Songs to sing?

OTHER EVENTS

Q: What about weddings and funerals?

A: Weddings: postpone.

Funerals: sadly but understandably (because of possibility of transmission of infection) we have been informed that funerals cannot take place during Level 4 lockdown. If your family member or friend dies, the funeral director engaged by you will have all details on hand in order that Ministry of Health protocols are strictly adhered to.

Q: What about our Parish AGM?

A: Any AGMs scheduled for the coming weeks should be postponed. Standing Committee will be asked to agree to accommodate new arrangements which allow for this within our statutes. This would include the provision for current Governing Bodies to continue to hold office in the meantime.

PASTORAL

Q: What should we do about pastoral visits?

A: Pastoral visits may not take place during the period of Level 4 lockdown.

Q: How else can we care for people?

A: Keep in touch with people by phone or email, to ensure they have support. Consider what practical support they might need and what might be available e.g. delivery of groceries/supplies.

Consider allocating a support person to each member of your parish community. Be mindful of the amount of supplies you have for your household or ministry unit. Don't hoard or buy more than you need and consider donating any extra to a local food bank (call ahead to confirm if your donation is welcome and how it can be given). Some members of your community might be impacted financially by changes to their employment status or sources of income. Consider what practical support you can offer.

What else should we do? You should be communicating regularly with your communities with up to date information about the diocesan and government response and following all guidance. You should be thinking about and implementing alternative ways to provide worship and ministry to your communities.

This could include:

- Regular emails
- Podcasts or videos/live streams of services/events
- Use of social media/websites to publish prayers, readings, reflections, music, etc.
- Services of prayer that parishioners can take home with them
- Webinars
- Telephone trees
- Prayer chains.

FINANCE

We understand that this crisis, which affects global, national and local economies will affect the financing of ministry in our ministry units, especially in our parishes.

Every effort is being made by the National Anglican Church as well as by relevant Diocesan committees to monitor the economic situation and to consider ways and means of acting responsibly in the light of new information, both from the government, the financial markets, and from our own financial advisors. You will appreciate that some key information is changing on an almost daily basis.

We appreciate that the government is making it possible, in certain circumstances for charities as well as for businesses to claim financial assistance for certain costs, including stipends and wages. We are working with churchwardens and treasurers in each parish on making a claim where this is warranted.

Finance questions and answers:

1. Will quota still have to be paid? *Yes.*
2. My parish is on the Parish Accounting Scheme. Will that continue? *Yes.*
3. My parish is on the Parish Accounting Scheme. How will I get the paper work to the Anglican Centre staff? *If possible please scan the paperwork and email it in or post/courier to the staff member's home address which they will advise.*
4. We won't have any collections on a Sunday. How will we pay our bills? *We are encouraging regular givers to commit to giving to their parishes via electronic and automatic payments.*
5. We have not held our AGM does that mean that the current vestry remains in office? *Yes.*
6. Do we still have to hold our AGM's? *Eventually, yes, but they cannot be held until we have reduced to an Alert Level in which it is safe to gather for meetings.*

7. Are we as a parish eligible for the wage/salary subsidy? *It will vary from parish to parish and we encourage conversation with Edwin Boyce our Diocesan Manager.*
8. How do we apply for the wage/salary subsidy if we are not a business? *This is being investigated but contact Edwin Boyce our Diocesan Manager about this. He will be issuing information to parishes on this subject before the end of this week.*
9. Do we have to make our staff redundant? *We are not planning for redundancies but we will be realistic as this crisis continues about the fact that in some ministry units we will not be able to continue as we have been.*
10. Should we reduce the hours of the lay staff and pay them less? *We ask that no decisions are made along these lines without first consulting with Edwin Boyce, our Diocesan Manager.*
11. What will our clergy be doing if they are working from home? *Many things, especially continuing to oversee and coordinate ways and means of pastoral care of parishioners and of providing worship and devotional material, whether in written form or via video transmission or both.*
12. Will we be able to draw down on our investments with CPT? *Yes, according to the usual processes and protocols.*
13. Will there be some sort of videoed worship that we can link into? *Yes. Please see this [DIO WEBPAGE](#)*

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