



Church in Wales guidance note

Subject: Coronavirus (Covid-19) guidance
Date: 5 March 2020

This is a revision of the guidance issued in February. The guidance is being kept under regular review

Prayer

Pray for all who suffer, including at this particular time those infected by the new coronavirus, (now renamed Covid-19 by WHO) 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 areas most at risk.

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 number of cases in the UK remains low and good preparation is in place, but the Government has recently raised the risk level from low to moderate following a recent increase in the number of cases.

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. Estimates of mortality rate vary, but it seems deaths are most likely to occur where there is a pre-existing condition, and amongst the elderly.

Public health advice is published at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>. This webpage should be monitored regularly.

This paper offers advice to churches.

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 countries and regions listed on the Government website above, or who have had contact with an infected person) are asked to self-isolate at home.

Keep an eye on the daily updates from official sources.

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 in their administration. 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. **Receive Holy Communion in one Kind.** It is, and has long been, Anglican teaching that to receive the sacrament in one kind only (ie. just the bread) is to receive the sacrament in its entirety. *With the recent increase of Covid-19 cases in the United Kingdom, we are now advising that public administration of the chalice should cease in the Church in Wales until further notice.* The Chalice must continue to be prepared and consecrated in the usual way, but the celebrant alone should receive from the Chalice.
3. **If, contrary to the above guidance, a parish continues to offer the chalice to the congregation, intinction (dipping the bread into the wine) should be prohibited.** 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 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.
4. **Sharing of the Peace.** *We are now strongly advising that physical sharing of the Peace be discontinued until further notice.* 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 mandated in our liturgical rites and are not required at this point. Non-physical means of exchanging the Peace are encouraged - such as saying 'peace be with you', preferably whilst making eye contact. Similarly, non-physical alternatives to shaking hands when greeting people entering and leaving church should be used.

Bench of Bishops, March 2020.