



*(May Gibbs, of "Snuggle Pot and Cuddlepie" fame, made this illustration for a Spanish Flu public health poster in 1919)*

18 March 2020

Dear Parishioners of Christ Church, St Lucia,

I am writing to provide an update on practices and procedures that will be followed at CCSL for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. These come from the COVID-19 Diocesan Website which has been created to provide us with ongoing advice. It can be accessed at <https://anglicanchurchsq.org.au/covid/>

I will briefly summarise below the sections of this advice that pertain to our services and parish activities, but I encourage all to read the webpage in its entirety. I have been advised that this information and advice might change regularly and unexpectedly, so I will try to keep the Parish informed as a best I can of any changes.

The salient points from the webpage include:

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## Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance and Information

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For current government advice in relation to COVID-19, please visit the below webpages:

- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Queensland Government](#)

## Communications

It is highly likely that for some months ahead a significant proportion of your congregation (if not all of them) will not be able to attend gathered events. It is important that you maintain connection with them throughout this time.

### Establish Clear Communication Channels

\* make sure people are on the church roll and their details are up to date including phone and email.

\* call everyone on your parish roll

- **find out:**

\* how they are coping physically, mentally and spiritually.

\* if they need support or are willing to give it.

\* how they might like to stay connected (email, phone, social media).

- **inform everyone:**

\* how you will be making key announcements about church

\* how they might access any resources your church will provide.

## Ministry Engagement

Consideration needs to be given to how you will continue to care for, nurture, disciple and teach your community if you cannot meet together. While there are many things that can be done it may be best to create a simple and achievable plan. The following actions might be considered:

**Plan for what you might share with your community on a regular basis (and how)**

Opportunities exist to continuing sharing sermons on a weekly basis or other shorter messages more regularly. These could be shared via video or live streaming but email could also be used. Facebook and other social media platforms can be a great way to share. Consideration should be given to church members who are not on social media.

### **Resource people for faithful patterns in the home**

During the period in which your church cannot meet together and people might be isolated there is an opportunity to assist people in developing patterns of faithful engagement in the home. This could include curating resources for prayer, the reading of scripture, reflection and worship.

### **Resources for Continuing Ministry Engagement**

While current advice is that gatherings small than five hundred can still take place the resources below are available to encourage parishes to think about how they might enable people to access Christian services and resources digitally in the event they are unable to get to church.

### **Live Streaming**

Read the [Church of England blog](#) which outlines how a church can inexpensively stream a sermon, service, event or thought for the day from the vicar or member of the church in situations where people are unable to attend church.

[check back soon for more resources in this section]

### **Guidelines for Worship Gatherings/Church Events**

#### **Care of those in high risk groups**

Many of our Sunday congregations have a high proportion of people aged over 70. This group of people, along with those who have weakened immune systems and long-term conditions such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease, are at a higher risk of severe impact from the Covid-19 virus (including death). For their safety, such people should be encouraged to consider **not attending** church for the foreseeable future. If they do decide to attend worship gatherings or church events, every precaution recommended below should be taken to protect them.

#### **Stay away if feeling unwell**

Please encourage and remind your parishioners that, if they are feeling ill, even mildly so, then they **should not** attend worship or church events. It is important to remind your community that the elderly and those with compromised immune systems will be at high risk, including death. Whatever communications systems you have available (email, Facebook etc) should be used to communicate this message.

## **Communion**

**From 16th March 2020, until otherwise advised, the common cup is suspended and communion is to be in one kind (the bread). Communion in one kind conveys the full blessing that God bestows in the sacrament.**

Use of individual cups is not authorised in this Diocese. Their use may increase the risk of the virus spreading.

Celebrants, communion administrators, Liturgical Assistants, and servers must follow proper hand washing and hand sanitising techniques. This means washing hands prior to the beginning of worship and using hand sanitiser immediately before the Preparation of the Gifts (i.e. at The Peace). Hands should also be washed after the liturgy/service.

When giving communion in the hand the person administering the host should take care not to touch the recipients hands.

Communicants may receive communion standing to avoid touching the communion rails.

## **Physical contact**

Physical contact with people should be avoided. As previously advised, hand shaking should be avoided, and the greeting of peace should not involve physical contact.

People should be encouraged to wash their hands often.

Hand sanitisers should be made available at strategic locations, particularly at entrances of church buildings. Parishioners should be encouraged to use hand sanitiser before entering church buildings/gatherings on church property.

Ensure very regular cleaning of surfaces that are touched frequently by multiple people.

## **Bibles, hymn books, prayer books and pew bulletins**

Churches should consider ceasing the use of shared Bibles, hymn books, prayer books and pew bulletins, where possible. If this is unavoidable, thought should be given to their distribution. Books should be sanitised with disinfectant wipes before distribution and after they are returned.

## **Collection plate**

Do not pass around the collection plate. Ask parishioners to place their offering in a collection plate as they enter or leave. Those counting the collection should use gloves and wash their hands thoroughly afterwards, ensuring they do not touch their face during counting. Encourage parishes to sign up to [Parish Direct](#).

## **Catering**

The suspension of catering (tea, coffee, morning tea etc.) where multiple people touch mugs, utensils and foodstuffs should be considered. If it is to continue, stringent hygiene practices should be carried out by those making and distributing food. Food should be served with tongs by servers using gloves. Consideration might be given to using food that is pre-packaged and can be opened by the individual.

## **Pastoral visiting of the sick and elderly**

Hospital and other forms of home visitation to the sick and elderly **by volunteers** should be suspended at this time.

When visiting people at home, clergy (and other pastoral care workers) should wash and/or sanitise their hands before giving the sacrament. There should be **no pastoral visits** to people who are self-isolating, until their isolation period has ended. Phone support should be offered in these instances. It is strongly recommended that clergy (and other pastoral care workers) use [appropriate personal protection](#) for all visiting.

When visiting people in care homes or hospitals, clergy (and other pastoral care workers) should follow advice from the hospital staff on infection control. It is strongly recommended that clergy (and other pastoral care workers) use appropriate personal protection.

Clergy (and other pastoral care workers) who are in high risk categories (such as the elderly, people with weakened immune systems and long-term conditions such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease) should evaluate whether it is wise to visit those who are sick.

Please think about how to care for and support those in your community who are ill or self-isolating, for example, by picking up/delivering essential supplies and medication to them. Current advice for those who are self-isolating is to try to avoid having visitors to your home (it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food or supplies). Also consider other methods of communicating with those who are ill or self-isolating, such as phone or email.

## **Anointing**

Clergy may be called upon to offer anointing in the coming months. This should only be done if appropriate personal protection is in place. Clergy should be doing all they can to reduce their risk while fulfilling their vocation. For some clergy, this could potentially mean not exposing themselves to those with the virus. This is particularly relevant to those clergy who are in a high-risk category (e.g. elderly, people with weakened immune systems and long-term conditions such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease).

## **Isolated clergy with the virus**

If a member of clergy is unwell and can't make other arrangements, they should contact their Regional Bishop. It is also possible that in coming weeks parish clergy may be required to be isolated and alternate arrangements will need to be made to cover their ministry. This will need to be dealt with on a case by case basis. It is possible that eucharistic worship and other forms of ministry may need to be suspended in some places. More thought and work is being done on how we will respond to this.

## **Baptisms**

The priest must wash their hands before and after making the sign of the cross on the candidate's forehead. Where possible, if the candidate is a baby or small child, they should be held by the parents/godparents rather than the priest taking them in their own arms. It is preferable for water to be poured on the candidate's head using a baptismal shell. If chrism/oil is to be used, the priest should use a spoon or similar implement. In any event, the priest should wash their hands before and after the baptism. Baptism by immersion should not take place as this represents a transmission risk.

## **Youth and children's ministry**

The risk of spreading the virus through youth and children's events should be evaluated and minimised. Volunteers who are in high risk categories (e.g. the elderly, people with weakened immune systems and long-term conditions

such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease) should be advised not to attend. This may mean that some events cannot go ahead, for example, if an event is largely dependent on elderly volunteers.

Children or youth who are unwell should not attend children's or youth events. Parents should be informed of this requirement. Stringent handwashing and hand sanitisation practices should occur. All surfaces, toys and equipment should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes before and after each session. Hand sanitiser should be used by each person upon entrance and exit.

If you are unable to fulfil any of the above requirements, it is recommended that you suspend this ministry.

### **Bible study and small group gatherings**

The risk of spreading the virus through Bible study and small group gatherings should be evaluated and minimised. At this stage, there is no need to suspend Bible study and small group gatherings. Members who are feeling ill, even mildly so, should not attend Bible study and small group gatherings. The suspension of catering (tea, coffee, food) where multiple people touch mugs, utensils and foodstuffs should be considered. If it is to continue, stringent hygiene practises should be carried out by those making and distributing food. Food should be served with tongs by servers using gloves. Consideration might be given to using food that is pre-packaged and can be opened by the individual.

If you are unable to fulfil any of the above requirements, it is recommended that you suspend this ministry.

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### **Church finances**

It is possible that, in the next six months or more, the virus will have a significant effect on parish attendance and finance. Further thought and work is underway on how we will respond to this. Parishioners might be encouraged now to switch to electronic forms of giving in order to support the church in the months ahead. [Parish Direct](#) is one way to do this.

### **Church closures**

It is possible that churches will be asked to suspend activities that involve gatherings in the coming months. This could occur if the priest or members of the congregation are diagnosed with the virus. Some form of disinfection of space may be required.

If this occurs, creativity will be required to ensure we continue the spiritual and physical care of our people. Further thought and work is underway on how we will respond to this.

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So, in summation, the most significant and immediate effects of these instructions at Christ Church will be:

- 1: At the Eucharist, communicants will receive the host (bread, wafer) only for the duration of the crisis. Please be assured that this is a completely valid and effective expression of the sacrament.
2. Use of hymnbooks, prayerbooks and individual bibles will be discontinued for the duration of the crisis. We will temporarily print the text of the hymns and the appointed psalm in the pew bulletin each week, and there will be single-use photocopies of the service available as well.
3. A collection will not be taken up during our services, but people will be encouraged to leave their offerings in a suitably placed receptacle before or after services. Anybody who could change to some form of electronic giving will be encouraged to do so.
4. Tea, coffee and other refreshments will not be served after services for the duration of the crisis. (I will make an exception for the simnel cake on Mothering. Sunday, 22 March 2020; this cake will be cut up and individually wrapped in small pieces.)

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Friends, the next few months is going to be a “wild ride”, as I heard it described recently. I thank you in anticipation of your understanding and forbearance as we try to simultaneously keep everybody safe and find different ways to accomplish our sacred task of living out and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peace and love,

Fr. Michael