

The Coronavirus

A
Diocese of St. Mark the Evangelist
Communique and Fact Sheet
on
Guidance for Staying Healthy
and
Suggested Best Practice for Worship and Church Gatherings

12 March 2020

Introduction

The purpose of this communique is to inform and advise our parishioners about the threat of the latest Coronavirus Disease identified late 2019, COVID-19.

Knowledge is power. By becoming properly informed about this disease, knowing your risk factors and how best to protect yourself will empower you to remain healthy.

The important point to remember is that we must not panic or be terrified of this COVID-19. It can be defeated. But we must learn to protect ourselves because the disease is potentially deadly.

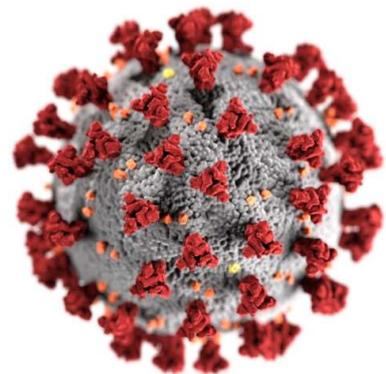
In this communique we will share with you some practical tips on how best to protect yourself and what you can do when you attend church, work and gatherings.

About the virus

In late 2019 an outbreak of a new disease occurred in China in the City of Wuhan. By early 2020 the responsible virus had been identified and the World Health Organisation declared an outbreak.

The identified virus was a new form of the Coronavirus. The Coronavirus is a large family of viruses which have a unique arrangement of protuberances which resemble small crowns – hence corona.

Many of the flu outbreaks every Winter are from this family of Coronaviruses.



Scanning Electron Microscope Image of a Coronavirus by CDC/ Alissa Eckert, MS; Dan Higgins, MAM

Did you know

The different forms of Coronavirus are particularly prevalent amongst certain animals and some cross the species gap and infect Humans. For example, the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2002-2004 was linked to civets and bats, and MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome) in 2012-2015 (with isolated cases being reported up to 2018) was linked to bats and camels.

This latest Coronavirus has its own unique name – SARS COV-2. Although many simply refer to it as COVID-19 or Coronavirus. This outbreak is linked to pangolins and bats.

It is a very contagious form of the Coronavirus and has a low mortality rate of between 3% to 5%. It is our wish that as few as possible, if any at all, should succumb to this disease and so we are encouraging you to listen to advice and protect yourself as best you can.

Who are most at risk?

The strength of your immune system is an important aspect in defeating this disease.

The young and healthy suffer very little, but the elderly and those already ill run the highest risk of encountering severe symptoms, and in approximately 3% to 5% of cases this may result in death.

Please follow the advice of your healthcare practitioner in staying as healthy as you can.

There is much fake-news and poor medical advice being sent, please be wise when you hear of quick, simple and ‘magic’ cures. If confused or uncertain, please ask a professional. Facebook, Google, Twitter and Whatsapp, etc. are not professionals!

How you become infected

Infection cannot happen from a mosquito bite or the virus casually floating through the air over long distances, or from your pets.

Infection must be through your breathing in or swallowing bodily fluids, of which the most common is saliva droplets spread from coughing, sneezing and talking when near an infected person.



When we talk there are small saliva droplets which escape from our mouths and can travel about one metre. Saliva droplets travel about two to three meters when you cough or sneeze. So being this distance or further will help you not become infected. Although people may look at you funny and think you are avoiding them.

It is also possible to be infected by touching certain contaminated surfaces such as a door handle, cell phone, etc. and then using your fingers and infected hands to eat, rub your mouth or scratch your eyes.

This SARS COV-2 virus can live on certain surfaces for several days but will be highly susceptible to heat and cold.

You cannot be infected through

~Imported Chinese goods!

~From your skin and into your body. It must gain entry through your mouth or eyes.

Fake News and Stigmatisation

Beware of fake news and rumour doing the rounds.

Numerous quick-fix cures, blame-shifting, and false information takes place as people use – and abuse – social media. Read carefully and think wisely about what you read.

There is no proof that this is a human-made virus and a laboratory accident.

No single vegetable or herb, for example Garlic, will cure you. Healthy eating is obviously important so eat what is good for you.

This is not the wrath of God on non-Christians or a sinful world.

This is not the fault of one or other people group.

How to protect yourself and what to do if you feel ill

Coronavirus 24 Hour Hotline +27 80 002 9999

Because this virus is mostly spread through saliva droplet the medical advice is that infected people be separated from everyone else for at least 14 days.

Therefore, those with a confirmed infection are quarantined in specially equipped hospitals, and those who may have been exposed to the virus are asked to self-quarantine by staying at home.

The most practical and effective method to protect yourself is to be responsible. This you can achieve by

1. If you feel ill and display the following symptoms immediately visit your doctor. But tell them beforehand your symptoms so they can also take the necessary precautions. The symptoms include
 - a. Low-grade fever of higher than 37,3 deg C.
 - b. Persistent Cough
 - c. Shortness of breath
 - d. Contact or travel history with an infected person or place
 - e. The following flu-like symptoms may also present: runny nose, headache, sore throat, feeling unwell
2. Practice strict hygiene by washing your hands frequently with soap and water. This is the single most important thing you can do to protect yourself
3. Place hand sanitiser in strategic places and encourage its use. However, hand sanitiser does not on its own kill the virus, unless the sanitiser is especially strong. However, it is good to use as a secondary act after washing your hands or if you do not have access to soap and water
4. Communicate the message about COVID-19 regularly to your staff and congregation. Get visiting healthcare practitioners to speak and display posters in the workplace
5. Respect those around you by not coughing or sneezing when close to them. If you must cough or sneeze do so into the inside of your elbow and not into your hands, or use a tissue

6. Keep the surfaces at home and where you work clean by using a detergent. This will kill any virus which may be sitting on the surface
7. Teach yourself not to let your fingers touch your mouth or eyes. Unless you wash your hands properly beforehand
8. Keep your distance from people, especially if you are not feeling well. But, do not over-do this as it can look like you do not like them
9. If you feel ill with flu-like symptoms, even if you doubt you have SARS COV-2, rather stay at home and not potentially place your friends at risk. Please do not abuse this privilege by using the opportunity to get out of work! You must report your symptoms to your doctor and follow their advice. The contact number for the Coronavirus Hotline is: +27 80 002 9999

I strongly suggest that those who are practicing responsibility and who stay at home when displaying COVID-19 symptoms should not have this time deducted from their sick or annual leave. They must however produce a sick note from their doctor confirming their responsible behaviour. It is also possible they could perform their work from home

10. Minimise your travel and attending large gatherings unless you are prepared and know how to protect yourself. Attending Church is important, but minimise shaking hands and encourage your ministry team to minimise any shared chalice, etc. We suggest best-practice on this subject late in this communique
11. Remain informed of the disease and share your knowledge. Do not spread fake-news and rumour
12. The wearing of a mask will not stop you becoming infected! Those who are infected are asked to wear a mask in order to minimise the spread of their saliva droplets. But, if you feel more comfortable wearing a mask there is nothing wrong in doing so, especially if you are going to be in a large crowd
13. Take advice before travelling to meetings outside of your area. It may also become necessary for Church council meetings, etc. to be temporarily halted until this pandemic is over
14. Consider taking the annual flu vaccine from your local health-care provider.

Going to work and church

Only if you think you are ill and are concerned should you isolate yourself and visit your doctor.

Otherwise, whilst being responsible, continue with your daily routine. Continuing to work and worship is important.

Conducting Pastoral Visits

All those doing pastoral visits should take every precaution to protect themselves and the people being visited.

Wash your hands thoroughly before and after.

Use hand sanitiser during the visit.

Try not to touch anyone's hands.

Do not share the same part of the common chalice or otherwise offer Holy Communion in one kind only.

Use the opportunity to explain what you are doing and why.

Suggested best practice for worship and church gatherings

We do not recommend you miss church unless you are not well, been exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19.

These recommendations are principally for when COVID-19 has been diagnosed in your area or if you would feel more comfortable in preparing yourself now.

We ask that each Church Council meets to discuss and plan how they wish to proceed in the light of these recommendations and with advice from qualified medical personnel.

We recommend you minimise handshaking and touching one another.

We recommend for the passing of the peace that you look at each other and smile and wave.

Do not cough or sneeze without covering your mouth with the inside of your elbow or by using a tissue. After every single use of a tissue dispose of it properly by placing it into a plastic bag and when convenient throwing it away into a rubbish bin.

We recommend the entire ministry team wash their hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water before and after distributing Holy Communion. The use of hand sanitisers is helpful but is nowhere near as effective as soap and water. Have a bowl of water with soap in the Sanctuary.

We recommend the ministry team offers Holy Communion in one-form only. This should be the Bread because the Wine is usually drunk with a shared Chalice. It may be that the Clergy and Lay Ministers may choose to share a Chalice, or the Celebrant alone will consume wine.

It is possible, but a little costly, to purchase small communion glasses and that each communicant receives their wine in their own glass. However, these small communion glasses must be thoroughly washed and dried in preparation for the next service. It is possible the virus could survive on an unclean glass and infect someone the following Sunday.

Make sure all communion dishes are washed thoroughly and properly dried.

It is permissible to use disposable gloves and masks when distributing the bread.

We do not recommend shaking hands at the door after the service.

All these recommendations must be discussed and adapted to fit your environment. They will last until the Coronavirus outbreak has passed.

Do not force people to do something they do not wish to do. Empower them to decide for themselves, with your wise advice and counsel, what they want to do.

Church Councils should begin now to develop a plan of action should an outbreak occur in your area. This will include for example who will conduct visits and pastoral care, the holding of meetings (rather not) and church services (only for the healthy, and with full precautions), and who to contact for advice and assistance should someone take seriously ill in the church.

Prayers for deliverance from the Coronavirus

See Attachment 1 for suggested prayers.

These prayers are from Pete Greig and 24-7 Prayer.

How to stay informed

These are suggested sites for further information

Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.epi-win.com/>

From the South African National Department of Health

www.nicd.ac.za

and

www.ndoh.gov.za

Posters

See Attachment 2 for a helpful poster from ABS/CBN News.

See Attachment 3 for a helpful poster from the eThekweni Municipality.

See Attachment 4 for a helpful poster. Source unknown.

See Attachment 5 for a helpful poster from Taiba Hospital.

Bibliography

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Source Unknown, Poster on Coronavirus symptoms

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World Health Organisation, *Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19*, PDF Article, 27 February 2020, Version 1.4

Attachment 1

See pages below

Attachment 2

Health Poster from ABS/CBN News

Attachment 3

Health Poster from Ethekwini Employee Wellness Program, *Coronavirus*

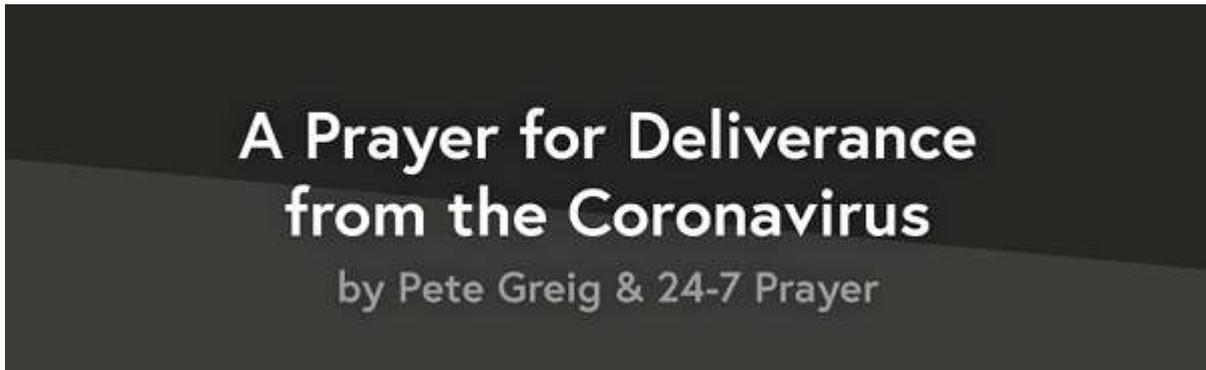
Attachment 4

Health poster on Coronavirus symptoms. Source unknown

Attachment 5

Health poster on avoiding the Coronavirus

Attachment 1



Lord Jesus Christ, we ask you to protect us from the spread of the coronavirus. You are powerful and merciful; let this be our prayer –

"Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed." (Psalm 57:1)

Jehovah Shalom, Lord of Peace, we remember those living in coronavirus hotspots and those currently in isolation. May they know your presence in their isolation, your peace in their turmoil and your patience in their waiting. Prince of Peace, you are powerful and merciful; let this be their prayer –

"May your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need. Help us, God our Saviour, for the glory of your name." (Psalm 79:8)

God of all Comfort and Counsel, we pray for those who are grieving, reeling from the sudden loss of loved-ones. May they find your fellowship in their suffering, your comfort in their loss, and your hope in their despair. We name before you those known to us who are vulnerable and scared – the frail, the sick and the elderly. *[pause]* God of all Comfort, you are powerful and merciful; may this be our prayer

"He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us." (2 Corinthians 1:10)

Jehovah Rapha, God who heals, we pray for all medical professionals dealing daily with the intense pressures of this crisis. Grant them resilience in weariness, discernment in diagnosis, and compassion upon compassion as they care. We thank you for the army of researchers working steadily and quietly towards a cure – give them clarity, serendipity and unexpected breakthroughs today. Would you rise above this present darkness as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in your rays. May this be our prayer –

"Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you." (Jeremiah 32:17)

God of all Wisdom, we pray for our leaders: the World Health Organisation, national governments, and local leaders too – heads of schools, hospitals and other institutions. Since you have positioned these people in public service for this hour, we ask you to grant them wisdom beyond their own wisdom to contain this virus, faith beyond their own faith to fight this fear, and strength beyond their own strength to sustain vital institutions through this time of turmoil. God of all Wisdom and Counsel, you are powerful and merciful; may this be our prayer –

***"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear"
(Psalms 46:1-2)***

I bless you with the words of Psalm 91: "Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you."
(Psalm 91:3-7)

"Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer." (Psalm 4:1)

May El Shaddai, the Lord God Almighty who loves you protect you. May Jesus Christ, His Son who died for you save you. And may the Holy Spirit who broods over the chaos and fills you with his presence, intercede for you and in you for others at this time.

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (2 Timothy 4:18)

[Download this prayer as a series of powerpoint slides](#)