



The Bishop of Chichester
The Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner

To all Licenced Clergy and Clergy with PTO

11 March 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

Coronavirus

Further to my *ad clerum* of Wednesday of last week, the situation regarding the spread of the Coronavirus in the UK has worsened.

As a result, and following legal and medical advice to the Archbishops of York and Canterbury and forwarded to all Bishops, I wish to outline clear guidance on the sharing of the Peace, the administration of Holy Communion, pastoral care and the use of holy water.

My strong advice to you for the time being and with immediate effect is as follows:

- You ask that there is no physical contact among members of the congregation at the point of the sharing of the Peace.
- You do not offer the chalice at Holy Communion. The priest presiding at Holy Communion will consecrate and receive a very small quantity of wine as well as the consecrated bread.
- The rest of the congregation will receive Holy Communion in only one kind – namely the consecrated wafer/bread, which should be received in the hand, not on the tongue.
- The priest presiding at Holy Communion, as well as those assisting in the preparation of the altar, should use hand sanitiser before handling

any of the vessels or elements for Holy Communion, and after the administration of Holy Communion and the cleansing of the vessels. NB You should announce this before the worship begins, and to assure the congregation that you are acting on the advice given to the bishops nationally and as a matter of necessity. Please also indicate that the power to regulate Holy Communion in this way already exists within the Church of England's legal provision.

- After the service, officiating clergy and any who assist them should avoid physical contact with members of the congregation at the door as they depart the church building.
- No one should use the laying-on of hands in any prayer or liturgical rite in church. The anointing of the sick could only happen after medical instruction has been given and noted down for reference.
- All holy water stoups, or the font, should be emptied and not refilled for devotional use until these restrictions are lifted.

These restrictions are provided for in the Church of England by the Sacraments Act of 1547. In addition, the third rubric after the gospel reading, in the BCP Communion of the Sick provides clear conditions for spiritual communion, applicable to pastoral care in a pandemic.

The restrictions should continue until such a time as the dangers associated with Coronavirus subside and you are notified that they can be lifted. Please be assured that this advice is offered as a matter of necessity in the face of the spread of Coronavirus. It is intended to ensure confidence in the continued access to the sacrament of Holy Communion.

I will write to you again on this matter if further restrictions become necessary, and certainly to inform you of when they can be lifted.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office if you need further clarification.

In the meantime, we hold in our prayers those who have contracted the virus, and their family and friends, as well as those in the medical profession who are urgently seeking a vaccine and caring for those already affected.

With thanks for our witness to the gospel in this time of plague and anxiety.

+Martin