

**THE DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER**  
**CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PARISH CONTINUITY PLAN**  
***CONTINUING TO KNOW, LOVE, FOLLOW JESUS***

The plan set out below is part of a national initiative by the Church of England. Its purpose is to assist you in sustaining our Christian life and witness during the Coronavirus epidemic.

The plan is not mandatory but it would be irresponsible of us not to have in place a clear and simple provisions for responding to the present unique and challenging circumstances. If you have already used the generic plan on the CofE website, you do not need to replicate it with this plan.

The list below is not exhaustive, neither is this a 'one size to fit all' plan.

This document is simply a guide to putting together a plan for your situation.

There is a check list at the end of this guide. Guidance is also available from the Church of England's website <https://www.churchofengland.org/coronavirus>. This is regularly updated on the basis of advice from Government, from the Church of England's medical advisers, and from the Archbishops.

As this epidemic unfolds, advice and regulation will change. Please update this plan to make sure that it fully takes each of those changes into account.

**It is vital that we keep in view our fundamental calling to know, love and follow Jesus.**

**These weeks of Lent are taking us into a particular kind of wilderness. We are being asked to deepen our commitment to being a pilgrim people who walk by faith. The God who liberates us from the fear of death walks with us. The light of Jesus Christ, entrusted to us in baptism, is our guide and our encouragement.**

**As clergy, serving a pilgrim people, it is essential that we pay renewed attention to our own spiritual resources. At ordination we were charged with being messengers, sentinels and stewards of the Lord in order that the children of God might be saved through Christ for ever.**

**Thank you for all that you are already doing in this time of fear and uncertainty to be a sign of the mercy of God who is with us in all our distress.**

**In addition to this continuity plan, prayer resources will also be made available on the diocesan website and the Church of England website.**

**Please be assured of my daily prayer for you, for your family and household, and for the people we serve in the name of Jesus Christ.**

+Martin

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**Name of Benefice** \_\_\_\_\_

**[and parishes]** \_\_\_\_\_

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**When completed, please ensure you send a copy to:**

- **The Bishop**
- **Your Archdeacon**
- **Your Rural Dean**
- **Your Churchwardens, other licensed and PTO clergy, Readers, ALMs**
- **The named contact persons (who sign to indicate they understand this plan)**

**1. Infrastructure**

The first point of contact for any notification that you as an incumbent are unable to function should be with the rural dean.

If the rural dean is out of action, you should contact your archdeacon (or the appropriate acting-archdeacon in the archdeaconry of Horsham), and if your archdeacon is unavailable, contact one of the other archdeacons or the bishop of Chichester.

Emergency contact details for archdeacons and for the bishop are given with the checklist.

Please give below the name and contact details of who will be the contact person who takes charge of information and administration in your benefice or in each parish that is in the benefice, if you are unwell or need to be isolated. These persons might be churchwardens, but not necessarily.

You should let this contact person know immediately if you are unable to continue ministry in the parish. But if you have difficulty doing so, the rural dean or archdeacon could do that for you, provided you have supplied them with this form and kept it up to date.

Ideally, two people should be named for each benefice or parish.

Please ensure that you have notified those who are named.

NB If this list includes retired clergy, remember that they are particularly vulnerable during this epidemic. But if they remain active in ministry, they should get a copy of this plan.

### Benefice

Contact 1:

Contact 2:

### Additional parishes

Contact 1:

Contact 2:

etc

1.1 All incumbents, curates, assistant clergy, churchwardens and named contact persons must ensure that they have emergency contact details for the Rural Dean, Archdeacons, and Bishop.

1.2 Incumbents should make a list of basic tasks that need to be covered, and simple, essential information about those tasks, so that the parish and benefice can continue to function.

1.3 Where possible, you should now inform the named contact persons you will nominating about the essential tasks in the parish and how to undertake them. This will reduce anxiety if you need to self-isolate or become ill.

## **2. Communication**

2.1 Please make sure that you and the named contact persons have the following details readily available:

- a. Clergy (licensed or with PTO), Readers and Authorised Lay Ministers (ALMs) who are available for ministry, occasional offices and pastoral care,
- b. Key laypeople who are involved in worship (music, servers, welcomers, bellringers etc) and other church activities (groups using church facilities, home groups, etc) .

2.2 Consideration should be given regarding how best to communicate information about the outbreak and any appropriate advice, via notice boards, news sheets, email and

through social media as appropriate. The Church, through its ordained and lay members, can play a key role in addressing rumours, misinformation, fear and anxiety.

2.3 It remains essential that we comply with the requirements of GDPR, please do not share contact details without consent.

### **3. General Hygiene**

3.1 Alcohol-based hand-sanitiser (minimum alcohol content 60%), or appropriate hand washing facilities in the event of a shortage of sanitisers should be available at the entrance to the church, with notices encouraging community and visitors to use on entry. Baby wipes are not a satisfactory alternative.

3.2 Tissues and bin provided at church entrance

3.3 Notices/posters should be displayed to remind people of the general hygiene advice. Examples can be found at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/catch-bin-kill.pdf>.

3.4 Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces as per government guidance.

3.5 Paper towels should be used in the lavatories, and for drying communion vessels.

3.6 Do not pass the collection plate around, but ensure that you provide an alternative way for the financial offering to be collected.

3.7 You might consider the use of single issue service sheets etc.

3.8 Suspend or adapt catering to ensure multiple people do not touch mugs, utensils, plates and foodstuffs, asking people to bring their own cups, using disposable paper ones, serving food with tongs or offering items individually wrapped.

### **4. Worship**

- As far as possible, all services will continue to be held as usual, in accordance with the guidance or instruction of Government, the Archbishops and the Diocese. At present the key elements of instruction are:
  - i. No physical contact at the sign of peace or before and after services
  - ii. Those administer communion must sanitise hands before and after
  - iii. Withdrawal of the common cup, communion in one kind
  - iv. Blessings at communion give without touch
  - v. The use of individual cups remains illegal in the CofE
  - vi. It is preferable for people to receive standing (to avoid common contact with the communion rail)

- vii. Holy water should not be used for devotional purposes in stoups and fonts
  - viii. Infants for baptism should be held by a parent or godparent; oil can be poured but not imposed by touch
  - ix. No laying-on of hands or anointing
- Guidance for worship (and governance, e.g. APCM, synods, etc) may change as the situation develops.
  - Clergy, Churchwardens and named contact persons should keep abreast of communications coming from the Diocese, the Church of England website, and Public Health England.

4.1 If further social distancing measures are imposed and the number of people in self-isolation increase, anxiety levels will inevitably rise. The diocese will ensure that you have information about on-line resources that enable people to find spiritual comfort and guidance at home. However, it is essential to plan for the pastoral and spiritual care of parishioners who live alone and especially those without internet access. We are planning for diocesan provision, available at <https://www.chichester.org/coronavirus-advice/> , supplementing resources from the Church of England: <https://www.churchofengland.org/coronavirus> and its Daily Prayer App.

4.2 If clergy decide to self-isolate, and there is no other priest (licensed or with PTO), Reader, ALM, or Churchwarden who is capable of taking a service, then notice must be given that there will not be one. In those circumstances the church where services are cancelled could helpfully advertise what services are still happening in other churches in the deanery, giving details of time and place. Contact details for the Rural Dean or Archdeacon should also be given in that public notice.

4.2 Daily prayers can help give structure to our days for those who are housebound with more time for thinking and reflecting. You may wish to consider signposting people to the online Common Worship, Daily Prayer resources and to produce local booklets to offer as *personal copies only* (please do not pass these around).

4.3 Copies of prayers for the sick and the dying and also a copy of the funeral service could be helpfully sent to those unable to attend the funeral of a friend or relative.

4.4 Setting up regular prayer times and using the church bell to sound the times of prayer, use of online conferencing facilities such as Skype, telephone prayer partners, could positively help to establish a sense of corporate prayer and the strengthening of the praying community.

## 5. Pastoral

- Clergy can offer an important public reassurance through ‘the sacrament of presence’ and being seen to be “present” and available. *This does not include physically visiting those diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who are self-isolating:*

clergy need to protect themselves and others, making sure they adhere to hygiene precautions

- Clergy can also be a trusted voice in a community and help with the distribution of government advice ensuring isolated members of the community are aware of the precautions they can take.

NB Further guidance on funeral ministry will follow in due course.

5.1 Check Church First Aid Kits and availability of trained first aid people.

5.2 Network as appropriate with local health, welfare, safety networks, funeral directors and other service providers. Ensure contact details for these service providers are held by key parish leadership. Be aware of local information and peculiarities e.g. changes in public utilities or services that affect your community specifically.

5.3 You must ensure that the pastoral and practical support of those who are vulnerable or housebound in the parish adheres to safeguarding policies as well as the present hygiene practices.

5.4 Plan for the care of those who need to self-isolate. They can be supported with phone calls and via social media, and helped with the delivery of shopping and / or medication. It is essential that all church members involved in such support are very clear on and committed to adhering to the Government's isolation and general hygiene advice.

5.5 If you offer to hold next of kin details for parishioners who live alone, make sure any such personal information is stored securely and you have the individual's permission to have these details in keeping with General Data Protection regulations.

5.6 Lay people who offer to provide telephone support, prayer, or any other support for those who are fearful or distressed must also be fully prepared for this ministry and supported in it.

## **6. Activities**

6. Each church group should consider what action must be taken in the event of key people not being available to run the activity. The following should be considered:

- maintaining an up to date list of contact details for the group
- deciding at what point the activity will be cancelled
- decide how members of the group will be kept informed
- nominate at least one person to be responsible for hygiene
- notify the Parish Office or Churchwardens or named contact person of decisions made in this context.

6.1 Determine the potential impact of outside agencies no longer being able to resource or serve the work of the parish church (e.g. suppliers and service providers)

**7. Finance**

7.1 There should be at least one other person, as well as the Treasurer, who is familiar with the church accounts, gift aid and regular giving and is able to administer them appropriately - this may include banking authorisation

7.2 If a large proportion of your income comes from cash collections at services, consider how you might manage banking cash, and ensuring outgoings can be paid during a period of time when fewer people are coming to church or church gatherings cease.

7.3 Anyone handling cash should protect themselves from virus transmission by washing hands or using hand gel beforehand and afterwards, or by wearing appropriate gloves.

7.4 If you have to cancel any engagements, please check in advance whether you have any liability for fees. Early cancellation can be a wise precaution: check cancellation deadlines.

**Please sign below:**

*Incumbent*.....

*Churchwardens*.....

*Named Contact Persons*.....

.....

*Etc.*

	<b>Check List for Parish/Benefice:</b> .....	Date completed/reviewed and by whom
1	<b>Infrastructure</b>	

1.1	The Incumbent and named contact persons will have emergency contact details for the Rural Dean, Archdeacons and Diocesan Bishop.	
1.2	Identify basic tasks that need to be covered, and simple, essential information about those tasks	
1.3	Inform & prepare named contact people about essential parish tasks	
2	<b>Communication</b>	
2.1	Make sure you and the named contact persons have contact details of: a. Clergy (licensed or with PTO), Readers and ALMs who are available for ministry, occasional offices and pastoral care, b. those involved in worship and other church activities.	
2.2	Consider how to communicate information about the outbreak and any appropriate advice	
3.	<b>General hygiene</b>	
3.1	Alcohol-based hand-sanitiser, or appropriate hand washing should be available at the entrance to the church, with Notices	
3.2	Tissues and bin provided by church entrance	
3.3	Notices/posters should be displayed to remind people of the general hygiene advice	
3.4	Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces as per government guidance.	
3.5	Paper towels to be used in the lavatories, and for drying communion vessels.	
3.6	Consider such things as stopping passing the collection plate around, use of single issue service sheets etc,	
3.7	Catering arrangements to be reviewed.	
4.	<b>Worship</b>	
4.1	Check you are fully compliant with up to date advice and consider alternate ways to offer worship and spiritual support to individuals and your community	
5.	<b>Pastoral</b>	
5.1	Check Church First Aid Kits and availability of trained first aid people	
5.2	Network as appropriate with local key service providers. Ensure contact details for these service providers are held by key parish leadership.	
5.3	Develop a plan for the pastoral and practical support of those who are vulnerable or housebound in the parish	
5.4	For those who need to self-isolate, consider how people can be supported	



5.5	Identify and brief lay people who can provide telephone support and prayer for those who are fearful or otherwise distressed.	
6.	<b>Activities</b>	
6.1	Each church group should consider what action must be taken in the event of key people not being available to run the activity	
6.2	Determine the potential impact of outside agencies no longer being able to resource or serve the work of the parish church (e.g. suppliers)	
7.	<b>Finance</b>	
7.1	There should be at least one other person, as well as the Treasurer, who is familiar with the church accounts, gift aid and regular giving	
7.2	Consider how you might manage cash flow, and manage any liability in bookings, wages, fees, etc	
7.3	Anyone handling cash should protect themselves by appropriate hand hygiene	

Emergency contact details for bishop and archdeacons:

Contact	Mobile	Email
Bishop Martin	07767 776646	<a href="mailto:bishop@chichester.anglican.org">bishop@chichester.anglican.org</a>
Martin Lloyd Williams	07305 412784	<a href="mailto:archbandl@chichester.anglican.org">archbandl@chichester.anglican.org</a>
Edward Dowler	07990 675242	<a href="mailto:archhastings@chichester.anglican.org">archhastings@chichester.anglican.org</a>
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