



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

AD CLERUM February 2020

Dear Friends,

THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK:

BACKGROUND:

This document has been prepared in response to The World Health Organisation's, (WHO), declaration on 31 January 2020 that the 'new strain of Coronavirus is a public health emergency of international concern'. This paper is being sent to all parishes within the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne for consideration and advice.

WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR:

The Coronavirus began in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan. In January the spread of the virus within China escalated and at the end of January 2020, the World Health Organisation, (WHO), declared a global emergency. A number of countries around the world have a small number of cases, including Australia.

The incubation period, (the time for an infected person to begin showing symptoms), is estimated by WHO to be between two and 10 days. Before an infected person shows symptom, they can transmit the virus to others. Currently officials from areas such as education and border protection, are asking that people quarantine themselves, (i.e. stay at home for 14 days if they have been exposed). Additionally, travel restrictions have been imposed to restrict the opportunity for the virus to spread.

The virus is transmitted through the air by sneezing and coughing. It can also be transmitted through contact with surfaces on which the virus is present and then subsequent transmission through contact of the hands on or near the face.

The WHO makes the following recommendations to reduce exposure to and transmission of the coronavirus which should be adopted as standard practise by individuals and communities:

- Avoiding close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.
- Frequent hand-washing, especially after direct contact with ill people or their environment.
- Avoiding unprotected contact with farm or wild animals.
- People with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing, and wash hands).
- Within healthcare facilities, enhance standard infection prevention and control practices in hospitals, especially in emergency departments

Right now, the virus appears to be a greater risk to older people and infants. This could also change over time should the virus become more widespread, or change in its composition.

The following are authoritative sites which you may find helpful in gaining further information as the situation is changing daily.

- The World Health Organisation

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

- The Australian Department of Health and Aging

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-novel-coronavirus.htm>

- The US Center for Disease Control [CDC]

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html>

- The Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy [CIDRAP]

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/infectious-disease-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

SOME SUGGESTIONS THAT PARISHES MAY WISH TO CONSIDER:

To use the Australian bushfire analogy, Australia is now in a “watch and act” level of severity. That suggests that as a community we should be ‘alert but not alarmed’. Congregations should consider practical ways in which:

- Contact with those with acute respiratory infections can be avoided [i.e.: asking those suffering such illness to absent themselves]
- Encouraging those who may have been in contact with family and friends in Wuhan or surrounding areas, and / or has been potentially exposed through travel / airlines etc. to consider self-isolation from the worshipping community for a period of 14 days
- The more conscious use of alcohol hand-wipes / gels and the explicit communication of the same to the congregation [s].
- Considering church gatherings and practice and what steps should be implemented locally in response to the virus. This might include dialogue as to what appropriate steps might be required into the future, should the need arise.
- How to support elements of the community who may suffer from racist or misdirected fear and comment. Several instances of this have occurred in the broader community aimed at persons believe to be from a Chinese background. The Coronavirus is an international issue.

Having visited the recommended sites, if you have **general** questions, please contact the Human Resources team on Ph [03] 9653 4220 or hr@melbourneanglican.org.au .

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PRAYER IN A TIME OF EPIDEMIC DISEASE

Lord Jesus Christ, healer and friend,
come and care for all of us
through the danger and uncertainty
of the coronavirus epidemic.
To people who are sick, bring healing.
To people who are displaced, isolated,
or cut off from family, friends or work,
bring comfort and companionship.
Work with medical staff as they care for the sick,
and protect them from harm.
Give skill and fruitful research to scientists
as they search for treatments, prevention and a cure.
To public health authorities, give wisdom
to decide the best ways to manage
both this crisis and our anxieties.
When communities are fearful,
give a calm spirit,
and kindness to neighbours and strangers.
Through this testing time,
and through all the risks we face together,
teach us once again how we can love one another
as you have loved us. Amen.

CONSIDERATIONS IN RESPECT TO LITURGICAL PRACTICE:

Based on the experience of some parishes in the Diocese, you may wish to enact the following measures as you consider an appropriate response to the coronavirus:

- Hand sanitiser at the entrance to the worship space and for communion assistants and / or the use of gloves as appropriate in preparation and cleaning;
- A greeting of the peace which does not involve a handshake;
- The use of individual communion cups [either disposable or multi-use with appropriate cleaning and sanitising protocols];
- Continued use of the Common Cup, but with intincture of the wafer by the presiding priest and or distributor [as opposed to the communicant];
- Receive the bread only and not the wine. If desired one can touch the base of the chalice and say "Amen".
- Alternative and appropriate disposal of consecrated wine following communion, as opposed to consumption by the presiding celebrant [for example, the pouring onto consecrated church land].

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NEXT STEPS

As the situation develops, we will continue to issue you with updates and any information which may be useful in managing your parish and the potential impact of the coronavirus. If you have ongoing questions in regard to appropriate **liturgical** practice in respect to the coronavirus, please contact your Episcopate Bishop for further advice.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Philip Melbourne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'P'.

The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier
Archbishop of Melbourne

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