



**From Bishop Donald    To the Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers**

*cc    Bishop's Council, Diocesan and Cathedral Staff, Diocesan Registrar,  
Diocesan and Deanery Lay Chairs, Yaxley Deanery Clergy and Lay Chair*

***Dear friends***

As with my last letter on hygiene at Holy Communion, I am sending this to churchwardens and to all clergy with permission to officiate, as well as to the usual recipients listed above.

### **Covid-19 Coronavirus**

Last month's letter introduced a new regime for Holy Communion, on a permanent basis: good hygiene, the bread to be placed on the recipient's hand, intinction to cease, and the option of not receiving the chalice where there is a fear of passing on infection.

I also said that there could be stricter temporary rules in the case of a health emergency. We are now approaching that situation with the covid-19 coronavirus. I am bringing those rules in now, with immediate effect. Once again, you will find the temporary coronavirus regime on the final page of this letter, which I ask incumbents (or churchwardens in a vacancy) to print out and display as before.

There is one possible further step, which I hope we won't have to take. The churches in Korea, under government instructions, have closed down all services. On Sundays the Bishop leads a service in the Cathedral, with handful of staff present. This is "livestreamed" so that people in any parish can see, hear, and hopefully participate at home via the internet. That would be a very last resort, and will only happen here if the government instructs it.

Before we get to the final page and the temporary instructions, a few other matters.

### **Congratulations**

Alex, my PA, had her baby on 29 February. Arthur William Tolley and his mother are both fit and well, as is big sister Harriet, and even daddy Craig. Congratulations and love to them all.

The current plan is for Alex to rejoin us in April next year, but in the meantime Joanne Gibson has settled very quickly and efficiently into the PA role. As always, the full list of bishops' office contact details is at the foot of this letter.

### **Paupers' Funerals**

We had a debate at General Synod last month about paupers' funerals: paid for at minimal cost by local authorities if there is no estate or family able to pay the normal costs. In recent years what is offered has reduced in ways which most of us at synod found quite distressing. There is no minister and no service, apart from anything else. I remember doing a number of these funerals in my parish days, but clearly times have changed.

It occurs to me that some of the clergy would be very willing to say prayers and read scripture over a coffin, even if only the funeral director is present, even out of doors at a graveside, even for no fee. I hope we all would.

Just a thought for the clergy: you might like to ask your local funeral director if they get many of these paupers' funerals (also known as local authority funerals or public health funerals). If they do, you might like to offer to conduct a minimal service at no charge.

## **Maundy Thursday**

With great regret, I am cancelling the lunch after the chrism service (renewal of vows and blessing of oils) on Maundy Thursday this year. The service will still take place as advertised (unless all church services are suspended by then), but there is no way we can maintain the appropriate emergency regime for catering with around 150 people in the Palace. Please accept my apologies, and I look forward to seeing the clergy at this event next year.

## **Ministers' Conference**

Licensed clergy and lay ministers will soon be hearing from Nicola Young, our conference administrator. Please keep the dates, 9-12 November, in your diary. I am writing now about a couple of matters, which she may reinforce when she writes.

- We will be looking for volunteer workshop leaders. The overall conference theme will be "old and new", with Bible studies in Hebrews. If you might be interested in leading a workshop, do get in touch with Nicola now (contact details at the foot of this letter) or once you have heard from her.
- As I mentioned last year, we will be inviting contributions to the cost of the conference. There is absolutely no compulsion to pay anything, and I will ensure that only one or two staff know who has paid. Bishops and archdeacons will not know. Making a contribution will not ensure a better room, or any other special treatment. The conference is paid for out of parish share, and costs around £300 per head for the 300+ of us who will be there. Many of us might be willing and able to make a contribution, but please don't feel guilty if you can't. (Travel costs are a legitimate expense from parishes, though we will be sharing transport where possible.)

***With warm greetings, and prayers for our nation and world.***

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Bishops' Office Secretary	rachel.lomas@
Conference Administrator (Nicola Young)	ministers.conference@
(Hon Assistant) Bishop Ed Condry	c/o Bishop Donald's PA
(Hon Assistant) Bishop Andrew Proud	c/o Bishop Donald's PA

# COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS: TEMPORARY REGULATIONS

From Bishop Donald

11 March 2020



Last month I issued instructions and guidance for hygiene at Holy Communion. Those have permanent effect.

This notice concerns the current covid-19 coronavirus outbreak. These are instructions which the clergy and churchwardens must implement, but they are temporary, and will be lifted when life returns to normal.

- Those giving out books or papers as people enter church, must have hygienically clean hands, in the same way as the ministers of Communion. Only the minimum necessary items should be given out.
- Greetings at the door, at the peace, and after the service, should not involve touching or very close contact. The peace can be shared with a nod, a smile, appropriate words, or in other ways, but without touching. This will be easier if people stay in their places, turning and looking around, rather than crowding into narrow spaces.
- No touching also means no laying on of hands or other touching for those receiving a blessing rather than Communion. Words, with the sign of the cross from a short distance, must suffice.
- The wine will not be shared at Holy Communion. The priest (or minister at Communion by Extension), will drink a small amount, saying aloud something like "The blood of Christ, shed for us all", but only the bread will be offered to communicants. As they introduce this practice, the clergy will make clear that all the benefits of Communion are received when only bread is shared.
- Refreshments can continue to be served, but with sensible hygiene precautions, and without people crowding together too closely.
- Pastoral care will be very important during this outbreak. Clergy and others should make sure that the needs of the lonely and the isolated are met as far as possible. However, if clergy or lay ministers are told to self-isolate they must do so, and if parishioners are self-isolating the clergy must not visit them, but should be in contact by phone or electronic media. Hospital visits should follow any advice or instructions given by hospital staff.

Please pray for all those affected in any way by this outbreak.  
With all good wishes

+ Donald