



Coronavirus: A letter from Dan 12/03/20

Dear All,

As the government moves from containment to delay phase in managing the spread of Coronavirus, it is necessary to take sensible precautions and plan for a possible increase in the outbreak, while not causing panic. I am aware that the unknown generates questions and uncertainties that often lead to fear and anxiety, however, I want to remind us all of the God that we seek to follow and serve – the one who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the one who defeated sin and death on the cross.

As the people of God, it is incumbent on us to take seriously the responsibility to protect the weakest and vulnerable in our society and to care for those in need. Christians should not throw sense to the wind or ignore advice from the government and Diocese. But I do want to urge us, in the face of a world gripped by fear of what might be, that the church should be the non-anxious presence that witnesses to the peace of Christ that lives in us. In a world where many people feel isolated, cut off from human connection and starved of relationship we have a calling to demonstrate and declare the good news of God. But we also need to be responsible and should not be careless or aid the spread of the virus.

As a Church, we are following the latest advice from the government and Diocese, so as of today we have taken the decision to:-

- Suspend the Common Chalice/Cup until further notice.
- Offer Communion in one kind only to all communicants i.e. the consecrated bread/wafer/host, with the priest alone taking the wine;
- suspend handshaking or other direct physical contact during the sharing of the peace.
- suspend direct physical contact as part of a blessing or 'laying on of hands'.
- suspending catering (teas, coffees etc) where multiple people touch mugs, utensils, biscuits, etc..i.e across services/any church group activity

Full details of the Diocese guidance, which St Mark's are following, can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

Can I also take this opportunity to encourage you to pay increased attention to NHS hygiene advice which can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> and in-particular to continue thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water? If you feel unwell then please stay at home, follow the advice given and contact the NHS; please notify the office if you are unwell and unable to fulfill your role on a rota at church.

Please note at the time of communication, Resurrected Bites remains open. All of the team are level 2 food hygiene trained and they are taking measures to reduce the risk from cross-contamination.

Finally, can I encourage us all to pray? Pray for God's mercy and an end to this virus. Pray for medical professionals and government decision-makers. Pray for those who are already isolated and concerned about cutting off vital connections. Pray for people who are at greater risk of more significant consequences of becoming infected. Pray for miracles. And pray for the witness of the church of Jesus Christ.

Many thanks,
Dan Watts