

## Down and Dromore Coronavirus Guidance April 2020

### **What about Vestry business?**

Current vestries and office holders should continue until such time as a new Easter Vestry can meet to elect new ones. However, a certain amount of business can still be conducted on-line. Although there are various computer applications that can be used to create a virtual meeting (such as "Zoom") my advice would be to only use a method that most, if not all, of your vestry can engage with such as email or a group text service (relying on mobile numbers) such as WhatsApp. Andrew, Julie or Tim can give you some basic advice on how to set up a 'Zoom' call or WhatsApp group.

### **What about other types of ministry support teams?**

As churches will now have to change considerably how they operate for this period it may be advisable to create a small ministry team or teams to help with continuity of ministry and to implement new responses going forward. You may find it helpful to form an online group to discuss ongoing responses. I encourage regular contact with those team members by phone and again opportunities to pray with and for each other through virtual means may be possible in some places.

### **What if a clergy person becomes ill?**

If you become sick or have to self-isolate, please inform the diocesan office as soon as possible and let us know who will be taking a lead in your absence. If you need someone to help with a digital service in your absence who is not licensed, please inform the Diocesan Office after you have chosen someone capable of reading the scriptures, preaching, teaching from the same and leading intercessions. Clergy have been issued with further guidelines, help and advice.

### **What about contact with the Diocesan Office?**

The office is closed but staff are working from home, with phone calls redirected. Therefore, please communicate with them via email, office phone and mobile phone as you would normally. The staff will be available and will do all they can to assist you.

### **What about pastoral care at a physical distance?**

Given this new complexity and the scale of the pastoral support that may be needed I would advise the creation of a team of people who will help to provide pastoral support under your leadership. These should be people who are willing to contact people via telephone, email and social media who feed back issues and progress. Many parishes already have this ministry underway.

### **What about Vulnerable Adults?**

At this time, you may want to create a separate list of those most vulnerable who need extra care and attention. You will all have your own ways of doing this, but a checklist template is available from Andrew that may be helpful. Remember that the safety of parishioners and others in our care is the top priority and other policies, such as GDPR, should not prevent you from exercising your ministry at this time.

### **What about Doorstep Visits?**

Current guidance is that people should only leave home for: shopping for basic necessities, medical need, travelling to and from work and one form of exercise a day. However under the section 'medical need' the guidance is '**Any medical need, or to provide care or to help a**

**vulnerable person'** (See this link: <https://bit.ly/3dH4DtW>). Therefore, you should feel able to continue to provide pastoral and practical support in this manner ensuring that you remain outside the home at a distance of at least 4 metres – twice the recommendation. These visits are permitted only for providing emergency assistance within current government guidance.

### **What about shopping and other practical support?**

Within these guidelines from the health authorities an offer to collect shopping, prescriptions, post mail and other practical help might be invaluable for those in need. However, you must remain at least 4 metres apart at all times and any items delivered must be handled in such a way as to ensure that cross contamination cannot take place. Select Vestries may be able and willing to create a small fund that would allow pastoral visitors to purchase receipted items (perhaps up to the value of £20 per household) to help support people that cannot access cash for purchasing items. This would alleviate any worries about being offered cash or cards to get shopping. (See also the recent communication about small grants for families in need that will be managed from the Diocesan Office).

### **What about Pastoral Support teams?**

Where not already in place I would advise the creation of a team of people who will help to provide pastoral support under your leadership. I am aware that in several parishes this is already in place. Please extensively use telephone calls as a way of listening to, offering support to and praying with those in need of pastoral care.

### **What about Phone Calls?**

Due to issues of self-isolation and also the increased level of contact that might be required I would suggest extensive use of phone calls. Again, you may find that a pastoral support team could assist in this and a sample phone contact template is available for pastoral helpers. The current need is to ensure that people's mental well-being, physical well-being and spiritual life are supported by the church and that this takes priority over GDPR concerns.

### **What about recording services online and numbers present?**

An officiant and no more than 1 other should be present at any time when recordings are being made.

### **What about Church Opening for Prayer?**

All church buildings should now be closed, except for essential work such as recording a service and providing a foodbank or other support to the vulnerable. Again, with no more than 2 people there at any time.

### **What about Digital Services?**

See guidance already issued. Numbers need to be restricted to 2 or less at any time with safe physical distancing.

### **What about Baptisms and Weddings?**

See guidance already issued. These will need to be postponed until further notice.

### **What about Funerals?**

In compliance with government guidelines there are severe restrictions on how funerals may be conducted. Please see the most up to date guidance issued to clergy by Bishop David.

## **What about Holy Week and Easter Services?**

For those parishes unable to broadcast their own services in Holy Week, we will share services from several different churches in the diocese on our digital platforms.

## **What about resources for prayer at this time of crisis?**

Please keep in touch with the Diocesan website and Facebook for regular updates on prayer resources.

## **What about other online communication?**

If you cannot use modern social media, please contact Tim or Julie at the Diocesan Office for assistance. People in other local parishes may also be willing to help

## **What about youth and children's ministry?**

A number of resources and ideas are already available in regard to this and are being posted up on the DDYC and JIGSAW Facebook pages. Others key resources will be emailed to you in regular updates. Among them are faith at home ideas, sample daily schedules for children and young people, games, bible activities and interactive learning websites. We also have an online version of the 'Family Time' books that have around 100 'at home' ideas that can be used with children.

## **What else can the church do to take a lead at this time?**

- Mobilising parishioners to 'love their neighbour' in practical ways through conversation, offers of help and advice and building relationships.
- Producing cards/leaflets that can be posted to those self-isolating, particularly the vulnerable, to offer help, prayer, information and a point of contact to your church.
- Making contact with other community organisations to see what help can be co-ordinated.
- Asking church volunteers to report back to you any concerns regarding health and well-being that they have regarding people contacted.
- Supporting, or even creating, a Food Bank to provide for those that cannot get out to shop.
- Providing a hardship fund to support families in dire situations with help to get shopping, heating oil and so on.
- The old-fashioned method of writing letters and sending greeting cards.