



# Anglican Church of Southern Africa Diocese of Grahamstown

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## ***Special Ad Clerum on the Coronavirus Pandemic***

20 March 2020

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### **OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF DIOCESE OF GRAHAMSTOWN IN CHAPTER: GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

The whole world is on alert as we face the outbreak of the coronavirus and, therefore we, together with Chapter, have met on Wednesday, 18 March 2020, to prayerfully seek God's guidance. As Christians we trust God and continue to pray for an end to the spread of this virus. Let us use the rest of the Lenten season as a time of fasting and prayer - praying for God's mercy and guidance and a special awareness of God's presence. If we are not able to fast throughout, we ask that Fridays at least be kept as a day of fasting and prayer.

The South African Government has announced preventive measures through the statement of Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, our President. Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, the Metropolitan of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa has also responded with some general suggestions for our services, worship and pastoral care. Please read these and make yourselves aware of the content. However, our contexts are different, and it is therefore important for the Diocese of Grahamstown to reflect on our practices in consultation with measures and suggestions already shared in our communities.

God has blessed us with the ability to think and understand and blessed us with science in order to be wise and find methods to protect ourselves. As the Body of Christ we therefore work together with the wider world in taking care of ourselves and listen to what the scientists and health workers tell us about Covid-19. We work together to protect especially the vulnerable – our elderly, our young children, those who are not well and the poor. We are called to do everything in our power to minimise the spread of the virus.

The following are some guidelines to assist us in taking better care of ourselves:

#### General

1. It is important to follow our rules on personal hygiene (e.g. regularly wash hands, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue in a closed bin).
2. We encourage parishioners who are not feeling 100%, to stay at home and recover.
3. When showing signs of flu, rather have it checked by a doctor. Make sure you have the *hotline 0800 29999* handy.

#### Clergy and all in leadership positions

We need to stay informed with the latest information in order to check the validity of information that is shared through social media. Fake news often causes more anxiety. It is also important to keep the parishioners informed of the latest information.

We need to find our strength in God and allow the peace of God, which passes all understanding, to guide us and keep us grounded. The parishioners look to us for guidance.

### Diocesan Conferences and Gatherings

Due to the 100 people rule, all conferences planned until the end of April be cancelled or postponed until a later date.

Alternatively, gatherings or meetings planned at Diocesan level e.g. the Diocesan MU Lady Day, should rather be celebrated at parish levels where groups of people will be smaller.

### Services, especially Sunday Services

1. As we journey through Lent towards Easter and with the outbreak of the coronavirus, people are looking for ways to be encouraged and supported. Services are especially important at this time. Services will continue.
2. If we hand out books during the service, disinfection measures should be used. Where numbers might be more than 100 people, we suggest that more – and smaller - services (with less than 100 people) for the day, or for the week, be implemented.
3. Rectors need to be creative in finding ways to minister to our people without having situations which could encourage infections.
4. During all services, alcohol-based sanitisers need to be available at the entrance/ in the foyer of the church building for people to clean their hands before they enter the rest of the building.
5. Where only water is available, a mixture of water and Jik can be used, poured over the hands of people outside the church building, with disposable paper towels used to dry.
6. We encourage all people to avoid physical contact as much as possible. (e.g. wave to greet, no touching during blessings)
7. During the sharing of the Peace, rather avoid contact and find creative ways to make contact with others without physically shaking hands (e.g. waving).
8. There needs to be sanitiser available at the sanctuary, so people are able to clean their hands after touching public objects and surfaces used by different people (e.g. altar rail, lectern)
9. During Communion: Stand to receive rather than kneel. Using communion in one kind only, is the safest option and is recommended. Intinction by the priest (if chosen to do) needs to be done with the utmost care. Accidents can happen easily.

### Funerals

As we minister to bereaved families, we need to encourage people to look at alternative ways and divide the services in order to create opportunities for more people to attend in small groups. E.g. a memorial services, a requiem mass and then the funeral service with burial.

### Weddings

Reduce the number of people who attend services

### Baptisms

If possible rather postpone the baptism.

When baptising, allow the parents to hold the child themselves or if an adult, s/he should stand close to the font without touching anyone.

Do not pour water over the person into the font and then use the same water for the next person. Rather, use a sterilised container to scoop the blessed water from the font and pour it over the person away from the font. Have a separate container to catch the water poured over the person being baptised.

### Pastoral Visits

It is important that people feel supported and we find ways to connect with our parishioners. Isolation is difficult for most of us.

All people involved in pastoral care need to take all precautions in personal hygiene before and after pastoral visits in hospitals and homes of parishioners.

### If people are not able to attend services, or if places of worship are closed

Let us use creative ways to connect with parishioners, e.g. video clips, live streaming, and social media.

We continue to trust God and hold on to our Shepherd. Jesus was not afraid to do things in a different way. May we be more aware of God's love calling us to new ways of meeting God and "doing church".

Grace and peace



BISHOP OF GRAHAMSTOWN

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**Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours.  
Ours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion for the world is to look out;  
ours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; and ours are the hands  
with which He is to bless us now. (St Teresa de Avila)**