

[Name] Parish/Benefice

CORONAVIRUS CONTINUITY PLAN

The Diocese of Oxford's Emergency Planning Team requests that each benefice and parish now put in place a continuity plan in preparedness for the developing Coronavirus situation.

The list below is not exhaustive, neither is this a 'one size to fit all' plan. Please use this document to put together a bespoke plan for your situation. There is also guidance available from the National Church [here](#). There are many unknowns about the development of this virus over the coming weeks and months; your plan will need to be revisited at various times as circumstances change.

Please do give this task urgent attention, and when completed, share a copy with your Area Dean; please include your list, with contact details, of all clergy and LLMs in your benefice.

Structures

1. The aim of this plan is to ensure as far as possible the continued mission and ministry of parishes, and the maintenance of the critical ongoing business of the parish.
2. The Incumbent, with the support of the Church Wardens, is requested to now take steps to prepare for the possibility of Coronavirus becoming a pandemic.
3. The Incumbent's nominated deputy is the [2nd Name]. The [3rd Name] will fulfil this role should [1st and 2nd name] be unwell.
4. The Incumbent, or his/her nominated deputy, will provide a channel for daily communication, by email or phone, with the Area Dean and Archdeacon.
5. The Incumbent and deputies will have emergency contact details for the Area Dean and the Area Dean's deputy.
6. Identify critical leadership roles and essential parish and benefice functions.
7. Encourage clergy with underlying health conditions and those in the 70s and 80s age bracket to carefully consider the point at which to withdraw from public ministry.
8. Cross-train people for essential tasks in the parish so that if a person needs to self-isolate or becomes ill, tasks can still be undertaken.

Communication

1. Parish/Benefice Offices or incumbent and the Churchwardens will have contact details of:
 - a. Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers who are available for ministry, occasional offices and pastoral care,
 - b. those involved in services and other church activities.
2. Consideration given how to communicate information about the pandemic and any appropriate advice, via notice boards, news sheets, email and through social media as appropriate.
 - a. Church leaders can play a key role in addressing rumours, misinformation, fear and anxiety.

General Hygiene

1. Alcohol-based hand-sanitiser at entrance to church, with Notice and Welcomers encouraging community and visitors to use on entry.
2. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces as per government guidance.
3. Paper towels only to be used in the toilets and kitchens, and for drying communion vessels.
4. Churches without running water to bring flasks of warm water, soap and a bowl for priest, servers and ministrants to wash hands.

Worship

1. All services will continue to be held as usual, as far as is possible and according to the guidance or instruction of Government and the Diocese of Oxford.
2. Guidance for worship may change as the situation develops, and 'guidance' may become an 'instruction'. Clergy and Church Wardens will keep abreast of communications coming from the Diocese, National Church and Public Health England.
3. If we have a period of time when a large number of people and households are self-isolating or discouraged from public gatherings, schools, places of business and places of worship may be forbidden from gathering. In such a situation, anxiety levels will rise and people will be looking for spiritual resources accessible at home to help them. Parishes should give consideration to the preparation of resources for parishioners, particularly those without internet access.
 - a. The Church of England is beginning to offer online resources and we expect these resources to be added to in due course.
4. Daily prayers can help give structure to our days when housebound with more time for thinking and reflecting. You may wish to consider signposting people to the online *Common Worship, Daily Prayer* resources, and to produce booklets to offer locally.
5. Copies of prayers for the sick and the dying and also a copy of the funeral service could be helpfully sent to those unable to attend the funeral of a friend or relative.
6. Setting up regular prayer times and using the church bell to sound the times of prayer, use of online conferencing facilities such as Skype, could positively help to establish a sense of corporate prayer and the strengthening of the praying community.

Pastoral

1. Clergy can offer an important public reassurance through 'the sacrament of presence' and being seen to be "present" and available across the parish (with the important caveat of not being physically with those who are self-isolating or are feeling unwell with Coronavirus symptoms).
2. Help with the distribution of government advice ensuring isolated members of the community are aware of the precautions they can take.
3. Check Church First Aid Kits and availability of trained first aid people.
4. Network with local health, welfare, safety networks, funeral directors and other service providers. Ensure contact details for these service providers are held by key parish leadership.

5. Be aware of local information and peculiarities e.g. changes in public utilities or services that affect your community specifically.
6. Develop a plan for the pastoral and practical support of those who are vulnerable or housebound in the parish (plan must of course adhere to safeguarding policies).
7. For those who are needing to self-isolate, consider how people can be supported with phone calls, emails and via social media, and helped with the delivery of shopping and / or medication. It is very important all church members involved in such support are very clear on and committed to adhering to the Government's isolation advice.
8. Be mindful that mental health deteriorates significantly for some people when they become isolated.
9. You may want to consider offering to hold next of kin details for parishioners who live alone.
10. Identify and brief lay people who can provide telephone support and prayer for those who are fearful or otherwise distressed.

Activities

1. Each church group should consider what action must be taken in the event of key people not being available to run the activity. The following should be considered:
 - a. maintaining an up to date list of contact details for the group
 - b. deciding at what point the activity will be cancelled
 - c. decide how members of the group will be kept informed
 - d. nominate at least one person to be responsible for hygiene
 - e. notify the Parish Office or Churchwardens of decisions made in this context.
2. Determine the potential impact of outside agencies no longer being able to resource or serve the work of the parish church (eg. suppliers and service providers)

Finance

1. There should be at least one other person, as well as the Treasurer, who is familiar with the church accounts, gift aid and regular giving and is able to administer them appropriately.
 - a. This may include banking authorisation
2. If a large proportion of your income comes from cash collections at services, consider how you might manage cash flow during a period of time when fewer people are coming to church or church gatherings cease.
3. Anyone handling cash should protect themselves from virus transmission by washing hands or using hand gel beforehand and afterwards, or by wearing appropriate gloves.

The Reverend [Name]
Incumbent

[Names]
Church Wardens

[Date] 2020