



## The Diocese of Newcastle

### FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF CLERGY CHAPTERS - regarding Pandemic flu

1. **Hygiene.** *It is most important that scrupulous personal hygiene is maintained when involved in pastoral visits. Wash hands regularly whenever possible, do not touch your mouth, eyes or nose with unwashed hands, use alcohol gel when necessary. Avoid touching hard surfaces.*

Encourage clergy to maintain a stock of alcohol gel and tissues.

How will parish clergy encourage good hygiene among their church members, and within the church buildings?

How will clergy communicate the importance of people not attending church when ill?

How will clergy decide when a personal visit is required rather than a phone call? (It is most important that clergy do not act as carriers of the virus).

2. **Pastoral care.**

- a. **People living alone.**

How might churches arrange to keep checks on those living alone, to offer them support & care?

- b. **Delayed funerals.** *In the peak period of the worst case scenario funeral services could be delayed – possibly by several weeks. In the meantime, the deceased would be stored in temporary mortuaries, and families would be unable to visit them. This would be very distressing for some people, especially if the deceased are children. Prayers will be said at regular intervals at the temporary mortuaries by the mortuary chaplains.*

What extra provision would your Deanery wish to make for this period of acute pastoral need?

Prayer leaflets could be a valuable resource, to give to bereaved families for their own use. Could such leaflets be produced at a Deanery level? By whom?

(It may be that some material will be produced on our Diocesan website – you will be informed about this).

Could it be made known that prayers are being said in parish churches at given times for the sick and dying? If meeting in church is still possible, bereaved families could be invited to such prayer times.

Will post-pandemic memorial services be of value?

Is there anything the Diocese might do to support you in this work?

3. **Covering across the Deanery.** *Clergy will not be immune to flu, nor will their families. It is possible that at the peak of the pandemic a large proportion of clergy will be sick, or caring for sick dependents. It is most important that clergy do not ‘soldier on’ and continue working, as this will only spread the disease further.*

How will clergy in your Deanery provide cover for each other?

If services are still happening, but a high proportion of clergy are unavailable, how will services continue?

Should people be identified in each parish to be trained to offer a Service of the Word?

Or will people be redirected to other churches? If so, how will this be communicated?

Plans should also be made for providing cover for funerals.

4. **The chalice.** *During a flu pandemic, chalices should not be used at Holy Communion. Intinction is only safe if done prior to the service. The other option is Communion in one kind. Wafers should be placed into hands, not mouths.*

How will clergy make decisions about the appropriate method of the distribution of Communion?  
What teaching may be necessary about Communion in one kind?

**5. Public meetings.** *It is possible that under some circumstances the government would ban public meetings. In the absence of such a ban, Deaneries will need to adopt a consistent approach to the appropriate withdrawal of activities. This approach may be different in highly populated areas compared with more rural situations.*

*The **first phase** would be concerned with weekday/community/hall-based activities.*

*The trigger for the closure of weekday/community/hall-based activities could perhaps be the closure of schools. This would be a good indicator that group activities have become dangerous.*

*The **second phase** would be to do with Sunday services.*

*Sunday worship should continue as long as possible, and as long as sensible. Consideration will need to be given to effective hygiene (1), the use of lay people to lead acts of worship(3), and thorough communication in the event of cancelled services(6).*

What trigger would your Deanery adopt for the closure of weekday/community/hall-based activities?

How would the cancellation of meetings be communicated?

How might pastoral care be offered to those unable to meet?

How might church 'business' continue in the absence of meetings?

**6. Communications.** *It is going to be vitally important to be able to maintain effective communication without face-to-face meeting. Full use should be made of the telephone (even conference calls if possible), email, text and the internet (even blogs). It may also be possible that local radio could be used to broadcast acts of worship.*

How is your Deanery going to communicate effectively about its decisions and actions?

How is your parish going to disseminate information easily and quickly among church members?

Do you have a telephone network? Or email addresses or mobile numbers for as many as possible?

Can parish or deanery websites be used?

How might the Diocesan website be of use to you?

**7. Hospitals.** *Hospital chaplains would have a higher than average likelihood of infection. Although the NHS is planning for the majority of sick/dying persons to stay at home, hospitals would still need to provide pastoral and spiritual care.*

*It may be that hospital chaplains will need to draft in clergy to go on honorary contracts. They would need to meet the usual CRB and badge requirements, and to receive some basic training. It would be important that these clergy were not then involved in parish visiting.*

How might your deanery support local chaplains in this task?

Can you identify some clergy who would be willing to have honorary contracts and be inducted and trained as back-up chaplains (and not engage in parish visiting)?

**8. Financial matters.** *It is highly likely that the size of congregations will drop during the outbreak (parishioners may be ill, caring for others, or concerned about becoming infected). In this case, or in the more extreme case of services being cancelled, the level of weekly giving to the church will be affected.*

Will churches seek to recoup this loss after the pandemic?

How could this be achieved in a pastorally sensitive way?

**Guidelines produced for Clergy in the Diocese of Newcastle April 2009**