

Clogher Diocesan Response Guidance

Updated guidance in red

Statement from the Archbishop of Armagh and the Archbishop of Dublin, The Most Revd John McDowell and The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson

Over the past few days An Taoiseach, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and the devolved administration in Northern Ireland have each published some form of “road map” to guide us out of the current severe restrictions which had been put in place in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Although the road maps differ somewhat from one another, they all point to a gradual and a graduated easing of restrictions. Each is set out in stages and presupposes that movement to the next stage will require satisfactory progress against certain criteria. It is acknowledged that there may be setbacks.

We want to thank all of those in the Church of Ireland community and far beyond who, by their sacrifice of personal liberty, have made progress to this point possible. We especially wish to thank all of those who have self-isolated and all who have strictly observed the guidelines laid down by public health authorities. It has often been far from comfortable to do so.

We wish also to commend those who have been involved in reaching out into their parishes and communities to maintain the work and witness of the Church; through online services of worship; through parish initiatives to maintain a sense of togetherness; and through action with other groups and projects. In short, by serving God, “not only with our lips but in our lives”.

The burden of work and of suffering during this period of emergency has not fallen equally on us all.

As the picture becomes clearer and the statistics more complete, we want to pay tribute to and give thanks for all who work in care homes throughout the island. Their selflessness and resourcefulness in caring for very vulnerable people under difficult circumstances cannot be praised highly enough.

The workers, residents and families in that sector, along with all who work on the front line in hospitals and in the community, remain at the forefront of our prayers. We continue to pray also for all who are ill and those who have been bereaved of loved ones at a time when funerals and grieving cannot follow their usual patterns.

As progress is made, there is an inevitable eagerness to return to our old patterns of worship. That is our hope too in the long run. In the meantime, as with any other gatherings which have the potential to spread the Covid-19, progress towards that goal will be gradual. A return to even small gatherings for worship will require close observance of both social distancing and hygiene requirements as laid down by the public health authorities. Even where such gathering for worship is permitted, it may well require each parish to carry out an evaluation and risk assessment.

For now, we thank God for the vocation he has given us to worship him, to care for his people, for our neighbours and for his world. We thank you for being faithful in living out that vocation in troubled and uncertain times and for moving forward in faith, in hope and in love.

+John Armagh and +Michael Dublin

A message from the Archbishop's Commissary, Archdeacon Brian Harper, can be viewed at <https://www.facebook.com/clogher.diocese/videos/259123341900652/>

This is a time of great challenge for the church, but also a time for the Christian Church to demonstrate a spirit of generosity and help to those in need. You will probably find a great desire from parishioners to get involved in this effort and all offers should be utilised as far as possible.

1. Public Worship

Services – All public acts of worship have ceased until further notice. Church buildings have not been open to the public, including for funerals, however Churches may be reopened for the purposes of private prayer provided a risk assessment has been completed and that social distancing and hygiene regulations can be adhered to. Parishes will be provided with further guidance directly in this regard.

Online Media – Clergy broadcasting services online should consider doing so from the Church or their home. Should the broadcast take place from the church, physical distancing should apply, hygiene guidance should be observed and no more than 2 people should be present in the church for the broadcast.

Forthcoming broadcasts for worshipping from home are available online at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Diary/>

Over 500 previous videos streamed online for worshipping from home are available at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Videos/>

If your parish co-ordinates worship resources that can be accessed online, please inform the Diocesan Communications Officer so that information of such can be circulated. Guidance for preparing online services is available at https://www.ireland.anglican.org/news/9485/covid19-guidance-for-online-services?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=church%20of%20ireland

Innovate – Many clergy and parishes are implementing alternative ways to offer worship and spiritual support to individuals and their community, those who have not are encouraged to consider doing so. Anxiety levels will rise and people will be looking for spiritual resources accessible at home to help them. Parishes should be giving consideration to the preparation of resources for parishioners, including those without Internet access.

Daily prayers - Daily prayers can help give structure to our days for those who are housebound with more time for thinking and reflecting. You may wish to consider signposting people to the online resources at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/prayer-worship/book-of-common-prayer/2004-texts/texts> and to produce local booklets to offer as *personal copies only* (please do not pass these around).

Prayer times – Parishes could consider setting up regular prayer times which people can join remotely rather than in person, using the church bell to sound the times of prayer, in addition to online conferencing facilities such as Skype, Facetime, Zoom, telephone prayer partners, in order to positively help establish a sense of corporate prayer and the strengthening of the praying community.

Dial-in Service - Tempo and Clabby Parishes have set up a dial-in service where members of the public, especially those who are unable to access online material, can dial 028 892 70880 in order to listen to parish information and the weekly Sunday service. A useful webpage with advice on how to set up this facility in your parish has been made available by Revd Andrew Irwin at https://medium.com/@andrewirwin_6116/online-church-setting-up-a-dial-in-phone-service-2c99c3bc75ab

2. Pastoral Care

Clergy, Lay Readers and Diocesan Pastoral Assistants – The health and well-being of parish and diocesan clergy together with support staff and volunteers is of paramount importance, both for their own protection and for those they minister to. Those with underlying health conditions, those that develop symptoms, and those over 70 years of age should adhere to government guidance concerning self-isolation and should inform a neighboring member of the clergy or supervising member of clergy of their availability / unavailability in order to enable the continuation of pastoral ministry in the parish. Clergy are reminded to co-ordinate the provision of pastoral care in their parishes in cooperation with neighbouring clergy.

Home Communion – All Home Communion should have ceased until further notice.

Visitation Protocols – All pastoral visitations should have ceased until further notice. Instead Clergy and/or Diocesan Pastoral Assistants should contact those needing pastoral care in parishes by telephoning them. The hospital chaplains are no longer permitted to carry out hospital visits unless expressly invited to do so by hospital staff. Clergy who are asked to visit parishioners in hospital or residential care should only do so if permitted by the hospital/residential facility and with the consent of the individual's family. Hygiene and physical distancing measures must be observed.

Pastoral and practical support - Develop a plan for the pastoral and practical support of those who are vulnerable or housebound in the parish (the plan must of course adhere to safeguarding policies and hygiene practices). Consider developing a 'Love thy Neighbour' scheme for those in self-isolation with a team of volunteers to: Regularly contact by phone to alleviate loneliness; Report concerns as to their health; Collect urgent supplies & shopping; Post mail, etc. You may want to consider offering to hold next of kin details for parishioners who live alone, but make sure any such personal information is stored securely and you have the individual's permission to have these details in keeping with General Data Protection regulations. Identify and brief lay people who can provide telephone support and prayer for those who are fearful or otherwise distressed.

Self-isolated - For those who need to self-isolate, consider how people can be supported with phone calls and via social media, and help with the delivery of shopping and / or medication. It is very important that all church members involved in such support are very clear on and committed to adhering to the Government's isolation and general hygiene advice.

Weddings – Weddings should not take place until further notice.

Funerals – Funerals should not take place in Church buildings until further notice. In many parts of this country we have come to expect that a funeral service with burial/cremation will normally take place around the third day after death. With the coronavirus crisis that may not always be possible, especially if there are numerous deaths and the authorities come under severe pressure. Members of the clergy can continue to perform funeral liturgies and services at the graveside and where possible outdoors at the home of the deceased as soon as legally and practically possible, working with funeral directors and others as appropriate, strictly adhering to hygiene advice and physical distancing measures.

Funerals should be attended by family members only up to a maximum of 10 in order to keep numbers in attendance low, it is strongly advisable that funeral arrangements (*time, date, venue*) are not publicly advertised in order to avoid large gatherings. Clergy should not visit the home of the deceased or the homes of the bereaved family other than to conduct a short funeral liturgy or service where possible outdoors at the home of the deceased. Funeral arrangements should be made by phone and/or email. Arrangements should at all times comply with physical distancing measures.

There should be no congregational singing, however background music could be offered where feasible. Hygiene advice and physical distancing should be strictly adhered to, physical contact including handshaking and funeral teas should not take place.

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, as could an audio or video recording of the service where this is possible.

The option of holding a Thanksgiving Service, to take place at a future date when possible, should be offered to bereaved families.

This information has been issued by the diocese to a number of undertakers, however some may have been overlooked, therefore it is important to refer local undertakers active in your parochial area to these guidelines.

Mental Health and Hardship – Efforts should be made to support those who may be struggling with mental health issues and/or hardship. It will be important to take measures, such as regular phone communication, to help alleviate loneliness and despair.

Links to helpful pieces regarding mental health:

www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/copingwithchange

www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/worry

www.clogher.anglican.org/docs/fear

3. Community Response

Volunteer Mobilisation – Volunteer support may be necessary for medical staff and for individuals in the community. Churches are well placed to channel information, particularly on requests for volunteers. Information will be circulated to clergy and parishes if and when available.

Public Reassurance – Clergy can offer important public reassurance through “the sacrament of presence” and being seen to be “present” and available. This does not include physically visiting those diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who are self-isolating: clergy need to protect themselves and others, making sure they adhere to physical distancing and hygiene precautions. Clergy can also be a trusted voice in a community and help with the distribution of government advice ensuring isolated members of the community are aware of the precautions they can take. Network as appropriate 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. Be aware of local information and peculiarities eg changes in public utilities or services that affect your community specifically.

4. Parish Administration

Premises - Churches and Church Halls are to remain closed to the public until further notice, with the exception of those parishes which choose to open their Church for private prayer and/or their carpark for drive-in Church services, provided a risk assessment has been completed and that social distancing and hygiene regulations can be adhered to. Parishes will be provided with further guidance directly in this regard.

Graveyards - The Northern Ireland Executive has given permission for the re-opening of cemeteries. So while we now re-open our church graveyards and are pleased we can do so, we must continue to observe other Government Guidelines, encourage safe social distancing and that gates, if possible, are left open to avoid people having to use the handles of the gates to churchyards as they enter. A healthy mixture of care and sensitivity as our churchyards re-open for the benefit of those who are grieving and want to visit family graves is to be encouraged. Parishes may find the poster available at http://clogher.anglican.org/images_non_news_small/Graveyard%20Notice%20Corona%20Virus.jpg useful to display at the entrances to graveyards.

Easter Vestries – All Easter Vestry meetings should be deferred until further notice and existing officers should remain in post until circumstances allow. <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/609/guidance-in-respect-of-possible%22%20/1%20%22section-609%22>

Easter Vestry Annual Returns - Easter Vestry Annual Returns cannot be completed at present as a meeting of the Easter Vestry needs to have taken place in order to populate most of the answers on the returns, and at present Easter Vestry meetings cannot take place. Parishes will be advised by the diocese if and when Easter Vestry meetings can be convened, this will be based on legal advice issued by the Church centrally in response to Government policy on the easing of restrictions.

Parish Annual Accounts - Select Vestries are at liberty, if they wish, to proceed to have their 2019 annual accounts completed in the appropriate manner for the parish concerned, and subsequently have the accounts considered and hopefully approved by the Select Vestry, whilst ensuring observation of Government restrictions. Select Vestries may find it useful to use email or post the draft accounts for

circulation purposes and either phone calls, written communication, email or video conference to seek approval of the annual accounts from Select Vestry members. Please note it is the Select Vestry that consider and approve the annual accounts, not the Easter Vestry - the accounts are presented to the Easter Vestry by the outgoing Select Vestry. Once accounts have been approved by the Select Vestry they can be submitted to the diocese and to the relevant charity regulator, taking care to ensure they fulfil any of the charity regulator requirements and deadlines in their respective jurisdiction. Certain parishes in the Republic of Ireland are not yet registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority and therefore do not have to submit their accounts to the Charities Regulatory Authority, but should continue to submit their annual accounts to the Diocese when possible.

Charity Returns – The charities regulators in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have both confirmed that organisations should follow government advice and that organisations will not be considered to be in contravention of the Act in this respect. Further information is available at <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/news/covid-19-coronavirus-information/>

<https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/information-for-charities/coronavirus-covid-19-and-charities>

Select Vestries – All Select Vestry meetings should be deferred until further notice. Matters requiring urgent consideration by a Select Vestry should be considered using electronic means such as teleconferencing, email circulation.

Parish Organisations – All parish organisations should be cancelled until further notice.

Continuation of Ministry – A template document to facilitate the continuation of ministry in parishes has been circulated to clergy. Parishes that have not prepared and submitted these are asked to do so.

5. RCB Guidance

RCB Covid-19 Guidance is available online at

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/?query=&categories=120>

Covid-19 Guidance for Online Services <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/606/covid19-guidance-for-online-services>

Covid-19 Resources for Family Activities <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/607/covid19-resources-for-family-activities>

Guidance for the temporary closure of church buildings during Covid-19 Pandemic

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/TempClosureBuildings-COVID19.pdf>

Covid-19: It's Still Open (*template signs for churches*)

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/622/covid19-its-still-open-template>

Insurance Considerations during Covid-19

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/InsGuides-COVID-19.pdf>

Irish Government Supports during Covid-19

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/IrishGvtSupportCovid-19.pdf>

United Kingdom Government Supports during Covid-19

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/UKGvtSupportsCovid-19.pdf>

Practical steps for Parish Treasurers and Select Vestries during Covid-19

<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Resources/ParishResources/COVID19/ParishTreasurersPracticalSteps.pdf>

[cticalSteps.pdf](#) (*The Diocese will communicate with parishes once action needs to be taken concerning Easter Vestry meetings*)

Euro Standing Order Mandate Form <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/619/euro-standing-order-mandate-form>

Sterling Standing Order Mandate Form <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/620/sterling-standing-order-mandate-form>

Guidance regarding Easter General Vestry meetings (Covid-19)
<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/609/guidance-regarding-easter-general-vestry>

Covid-19: Mission reflections, response and resources for parishes
<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/608/covid19-mission-reflections-response-and>

Responding to Covid-19: Photo Gallery <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/614/responding-to-covid19-photo-gallery>

Church of Ireland Guidance in relation to Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19)
<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/613/church-of-ireland-guidance-in>

Church of Ireland Guidelines for the Church's response to Novel Coronavirus
<https://www.ireland.anglican.org/resources/615/church-of-ireland-guidance-in>

6. Diocesan Office

The Diocesan Office is closed until further notice. Mail will be received intermittently. Staff will be working remotely and can be contacted by email or by telephoning the **Diocesan Office – 02866347879:**

- Diocesan Accountant – A Brown, opt 2, accountant@clogher.anglican.org
- Communications & Magazine Editor – B Donaldson, opt 3 – dco@clogher.anglican.org
- Diocesan Secretary – G Moore, opt 5, secretary@clogher.anglican.org
- Archdeacon – B Harper, opt 6 – archdeacon@clogher.anglican.org
- Dean & Enniskillen Cathedral Office – B Rennick, opt 7 – enniskillen@clogher.anglican.org
- Properties – H Robinson, opt 8 – properties@clogher.anglican.org
- Safeguarding & GDPR – M Skuce, opt 9 – safeguarding@clogher.anglican.org

7. Communications

Diocesan Magazine – A free digital version of the May edition of the Diocesan Magazine is available on the diocesan website at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Magazine/>

Unfortunately hard copies of the magazine will not be produced currently. Parishes may wish to print off hard copies or sections of the magazine from the online version in order to provide copies to those within their parish who are unable to access the magazine online.

Information for the June edition of the diocesan magazine can be sent to editor@clogher.anglican.org up to 22nd May.

Information and Guidance – The diocesan website will be used as the principle point of communication to provide regular updates for parishes and the general public. Information will also be made available through the diocesan Facebook page and through press releases. Information particularly for the attention of parishes and clergy will be circulated via email.

Reaching out – Parishes, with their own websites and Facebook pages and those without these are welcome to use the Diocesan Website and Facebook Page to communicate the latest advice to parishioners and worshippers. Please email dco@clogher.anglican.org with information.

8. Diocesan Diary

All diocesan meetings and training events have been cancelled until further notice.