

Clogher Diocesan Response Guidance

Updated guidance in red

A Message from the Bishop

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,
and though the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea;
Though the waters rage and swell,
and though the mountains quake at the towering seas.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place of the dwelling of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; therefore shall she not be removed;
God shall help her at the break of day.
The nations are in uproar and the kingdoms are shaken,
but God utters his voice and the earth shall melt away.
The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Psalm 46;1-7, appointed Psalm for St Macartan's Day

Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I think its no exaggeration to say that we all got quite a shock last night when the Prime Minister in the UK announced the very wide ranging restrictions which we will all have to live with for a time. As this goes out similar restrictions have been announced by the Taoiseach in the Republic of Ireland. However, as the first day of the temporary “new normal” dawns, I would like to offer some words of hope and assurance.

It is said of St Macartan that he was a strong man. Maybe he was. We know very little about him. But if he was anything like his mentor, St Patrick, his strength was rooted entirely in his dependence on God.

We are passing through an uncertain time. Many of the things which we took for granted are now not ours. We have lost simple freedoms: freedom to go where we liked when we liked; freedom to buy what we could afford; a feeling that, all being well, tomorrow would be much the same as today. For a while that will all be different.

Above all else we will need to look out for one another and to be calm and measured in all that we do. Apart from our healthcare workers which I mention

specially later on in this message, I want to ask you to think about those who are self-isolating or particularly because of age or underlying medical condition. It would be very helpful if parishes tried to identify who the most vulnerable of those might be and to regularly check that they are being looked after.

As this message, whether it is being read online or listened to on Facebook demonstrates, we are now heavily dependent on technology to stay in touch and to “keep company”. Many of those who are self-isolating, will be using technology to stay connected. But there will be those in your parish who are not familiar with technology and cannot use it. Perhaps you can imagine some way that such people can be helped to get a tablet (or some other device) and to be given basic help in how to use it. Please think about that.

Although it is inevitably a little uncertain what our new rhythms of life will be for some weeks or months, we *will* find that new rhythm. It may not be as materially rich as we’re used to, but perhaps we will find time to feed on the things of the Spirit.

I think our greatest enemy at present may be anxiety. That is perfectly understandable and I don't want to offer you any glib antidotes. But, as your bishop, I do want to assure you of my prayers as you turn to God in a new situation. As you “cast all your cares on him, because he cares for you”. Look after yourself psychologically and spiritually. Find a pattern that works for you.

We will all have different ways of doing this, but can I suggest that you, and your family (when you are together) try to say daily the two prayers which are at the end of this letter. The first is the General Thanksgiving, because, you know, we do have a great deal to be thankful for compared to those living in many other, very poor and poorly governed parts of the world.

The second is a prayer for all our healthcare workers, who are being called upon to make heroic efforts to care for people and to keep as many people alive as possible. And if we are praying for them, let us also especially look out for them and make an extra effort to ensure they are provided for, if they are our neighbours, parishioners and friends.

I want to end this message with a little meditation which was passed onto me by an Indian Bishop in a Whatsapp Group I belong to. It was written by a priest of the Mar Thoma Church in India, a man who had endured much suffering, far beyond what we are being asked to live through:

*No rain has not ended
No wind has not calmed
No night has not turned to day
No pain has not subsided
All things pass
God reigns*

The General Thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, We thine unworthy servants Do give thee most humble and hearty thanks For all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life: But above all, for thine inestimable love In the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; For the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, That our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, And that we show forth thy praise, Not only with our lips but in our lives; By giving up ourselves to thy service, And by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, To whom with thee and the Holy Spirit Be all honour and glory, World without end. Amen.

A Prayer for healthcare workers

Lord Jesus Christ, who said “forasmuch as you do these things to my brothers and sisters, you do them to me” be near to all those who care for the sick at this time. Give them a sure sense of your presence, and a full measure of your spirit of care and love. Guide their hands and keep their hearts as they bring health and healing to all in their care, who you lived and died to save. And keep them, Lord in perfect peace as they do your will. Amen

In Christ

+John Clogher

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 should by now have ceased until further notice. Church buildings should not be open to the public.

Online Media – Clergy broadcasting services online should consider doing so from their home rather than the Church. Resources for worshipping from home are available online at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Diary/>

Many parishes have already initiated such initiatives. If your parish coordinates 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 already 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 already 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.

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 Communions – All Home Communions should have ceased by now until further notice.

Visitation Protocols – All pastoral visitations should have ceased by now 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 no longer take place until further notice.

Funerals – 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 evolving coronavirus crisis that may not 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 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 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. Funeral arrangements should be made by phone and/or email.

A marker, such as a sheet of paper, should be placed at appropriate places on chairs / pews in order to ensure the seating arrangements 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.

3. Community Response

Volunteer Mobilisation – In time 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 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 - All public parish premises should be closed by now until further notice, this includes Churches and Church Halls. Church buildings should not be open to the public for private prayer and reflection in order to avoid unintentional gathering of people. In due course there may be need for church premises to be made available for civic response purposes, these can be considered compassionately as they arise.

Easter Vestries – All Easter Vestry meetings should be deferred until further notice and existing officers should remain in post until circumstances allow.

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 by now be cancelled until further notice.

Charity Returns and Annual Accounts – 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>

Continuation of Ministry – A template document to facilitate the continuation of ministry in parishes has been circulated to clergy.

5. Diocesan Office

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

- Administration Assistant – S McCabe, opt 1 (*voicemail only*), admin@clogher.anglican.org
- Diocesan Accountant – A Brown, opt 2, accountant@clogher.anglican.org
- Communications & Magazine Editor – B Donaldson, opt 3 – dco@clogher.anglican.org
- Youth Officer – J Phenix, opt 4 – dyo@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

6. Communications

Diocesan Magazine – The April edition of the Diocesan Magazine will be produced as planned. A free digital version will be made available on the diocesan website at <http://www.clogher.anglican.org/Magazine/>

Unfortunately hard copies of the magazine will not be produced. Parishes may wish to print off hard copies, or sections of the magazine from the online version once it is available, in order to provide copies to those within their parish who are unable to access the online version. **Information for the May edition of the diocesan magazine can be sent to editor@clogher.anglican.org up to 22nd April.**

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.

7. Diocesan Diary

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