



20.3.2020

Dear Colleagues

Another day, another mailing from me.

### OUR SITUATION

The Revd Professor Alasdair Coles, part of the Immunology Network at Cambridge University, tells us that we are going through the worst medical emergency this country has known outside of war time: *Already people with treatable conditions, who could be saved normally, have died because we do not have the capacity to treat them. Young doctors are being ventilated. We know since testing has stopped that the numbers of the infected only count those with severe infection, not all who are infectious. It will be nigh impossible to avoid infection unless strictly self-isolating.*

Therefore, rather than looking to see what, despite restrictions, we might still be able to do, we should consider what we can contribute in order to relieve the pressure on hospital staff who are going through such a painful time, and thereby also release hospital beds that others desperately need.

Any one of us should feel proud when we are NOT doing things we would normally do or enjoy doing or even have hitherto seen as a duty to do, because it will help and support the national effort in which we surely must play our fullest part. Unfortunately, we will make ourselves unpopular with some who cannot take in the severity of the situation, but this is a necessary price for serving our communities.

### WEDDING LICENCES – IMPORTANT FEES UPDATE

For those couples who wish to go ahead with the marriage service, despite the current guidance on numbers attending the ceremony in church (strictly curtailed to the legal minimum, which is the priest, bride, groom and two witnesses): unless their banns have already been called in full, they will need to apply for a Common Licence.

In response to our concern about the fee for a Common Licence, the following has come out from the Faculty Office today:

*The Chancellor has agreed a table of fees until further notice which allow for a reduced rate for couples who have paid out for their banns, and another rate for those who have not but who cannot now have banns read because of Covid-19. In the first case, the Chancellor has agreed with effect from today a total fee of £50. In the latter case, a fee of £90 which is closer to the cost of having banns read and obtaining a banns certificate. There is no VAT. Any fee paid is not refundable.*

*The fees will break down as follows:*

- A. Normally: £200: broken down: Surrogate £52; Chancellor £26; Registry £122
- B. For those couples whose banns fee has been paid but banns not completed due to Covid-19 - £50; broken down: £25 Surrogate; Chancellor £0; £25 Registry;
- C. Banns fee not paid but banns can't be read because of Covid-19\* - £90; broken down: £25 Surrogate; Chancellor £0; £65 Registry

*We pray to be generous and visible people of Jesus Christ*

*\*If a common licence was needed anyway and the need is brought about by reasons unrelated to Covid-19 (eg parties living overseas) – then the normal fee of £200 needs to be charged, please.*

*If you have already taken payment for common licence in relation to a Covid-19 related case, we would be open to reimbursing the couple for the difference in cost. That may be by returning one cheque in return for another.*

Some of you have wondered whether we are liable if couples postpone their wedding due to our restrictions. However, we are not preventing them since they can still be legally married, and in any case, given today's decision of our Government to close all pubs and restaurants, most couples will surely postpone their big day.

## **APCM**

We all realize that APCM meetings cannot go ahead as planned this year. Therefore, please find attached a "Bishop's Instrument" which extends the time for holding a meeting of parishioners to choose churchwardens until 31 October (instead of 31 May). Similarly, the period for holding an annual meeting of parishioners (APCM) is extended to 31 October. Terms of office for Churchwardens, Deanery Synod reps, and PCC members are likewise extended. For details, please see the explanatory note beginning at the end of page 2.

## **POSTER**

Please find attached a poster for you to put up in your outside church noticeboards. You can also download it [here](#).

Obviously should the advice concerning open churches change, this will need to be taken down.

May I remind you that while it will be lovely for people to find prayer resources inside your churches, these should carry the clear instruction to be taken away if touched.

## **KEYWORKERS**

As you may have picked up, the government have listed among the categories of key workers whose children will be prioritised to remain in school "religious staff", such as parish clergy and chaplains whose work is critical to the Covid-19 response.

Schools are going to be under tremendous pressure, and many in our communities will be struggling with having to cope with their children being at home. But some of you may need to seek that provision to enable your ministry.

The first key principle in the Government guidance is that: 'If it is at all possible for children to be at home then they should be'. The offer of school care is mostly open to single parents who are critical workers, or where both parents are critical workers, and where there is nobody else (e.g. older sibling, stepparent) who is able to care safely for the children at home. Note also that it is not advisable for grandparents to be asked to look after children. Clergy to whom the following criteria apply should contact Hannah Cleugh and she will arrange the necessary letters for you

- (a) school provision is the only way they can provide childcare and
- (b) based on the demands of their parish or chaplaincy their specific role is necessary to the continuation of an essential public service. An example of this might be the need to take a funeral.

It would be helpful if, when you contact her, you could let her know the names, schools, and school years of your children as she will not have access to that information otherwise.

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## WORSHIP

You will have heard that the Archbishop of Canterbury will lead a national broadcast as we respond to the challenge of becoming a “different sort of church” in the face of the coronavirus crisis. This will be broadcast online by the Church of England and broadcast on BBC Radio 4’s Sunday Worship and 39 local BBC radio stations this Sunday. Our Diocesan website also provides links to numerous services being streamed in our Diocese.

The Church of England has published guidance on Spiritual Communion which you will also find attached.

There’s also the [National Day of Prayer and Action](#) this Mothering Sunday, supported by Christian denominations across the board, and don’t forget to put that candle in your window at 7pm on Sunday night (mind the curtains!).

## AND FINALLY

We are at the end of a pretty full week.

I am grateful for all you are doing up and down the Diocese, from Norfolk to Peterborough, from the Fens to Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and everywhere else.

Please look after your physical health and don’t take lightly the risks of infection.

Also look after your mental well-being. It’s all a bit frantic on emails and social media so make sure you have times when you literally switch off and go for a walk.

Please ask questions about any issues you face – and also, to ease the strain on us all, don’t email or post every thought or comment that you might have!

It is strange indeed that Mothering Sunday should be the first Sunday at which there can be no public worship during this crisis. My favourite Gospel passage for this Sunday is the one which curiously fast-forwards us to Good Friday: Jesus is dying on the cross when he sees his mother and a disciple, we think it was John, standing together. And he says to his mother – ‘woman, here is your son’ and to the disciple – ‘here is your mother’.

And from that hour, the Gospel says, the disciple took her into his own home.

The profound truth here is that Jesus creates relationships, relationships of love, and refers people to one another.

The old question 'shall I be my brother's keeper' receives its final answer at the foot of the cross: children of God, we are one community, and especially in these days we can make such a difference by making sure other people’s mothers and grandmothers are all right too and have what they need. That’s mothering in God’s kingdom.

God of love,  
passionate and strong.  
tender and careful:  
watch over us and hold us all the days of our life.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.  
Yours in Christ,



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