

**CORONAVIRUS – COVID19**  
**FURTHER PASTORAL GUIDANCE**  
**FROM THE BENCH OF BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH IN WALES**  
**EFFECTIVE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

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### **The background**

The Prime Minister has told us all that, in order to slow the spread of coronavirus at this critical time, we must stay at home other than for very limited purposes about which helpful guidance has been given.

We may go outside:

- To shop for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, but should do so as infrequently as possible.
- For health reasons, medical need, or to provide care or help for a vulnerable person.
- For one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle, alone or with members of our household.
- For travel to and from essential work, as defined by the government, and only where this work cannot be done from home.

If leaving home:

- We must stay 2 metres – about 6 feet – away from other people.
- We should wash our hands on returning home.

### **Church buildings**

We know that our churches have always been places of sanctuary, peace and wellbeing. However, it is now clear that health and healing are best served by church buildings being closed. All church buildings should therefore be closed until further notice. This means churches should **not** be open for solitary prayer. Any exception from this action (other than as noted below) should only take place with the diocesan bishop's express permission.

Where worship is to be broadcast or recorded, it is preferable to do so from home. Clergy who live immediately adjacent to churches may do so from the church, but the doors should be locked and others should not be invited to be present.

An exception may be made, if necessary, to open church buildings to host existing foodbanks, soup kitchens and homeless shelters. However, these church buildings should be open for this purpose alone, and all appropriate hygiene precautions should be taken.

### **Pastoral visiting**

Clergy and others duly licensed or commissioned should exercise their pastoral ministry from a distance, by phone and online. Pastoral visits should only be undertaken because of an extreme pastoral emergency when the presence of a priest or deacon is exceptionally required. Bishops are able to give advice on what might constitute an extreme pastoral emergency

### **Funerals**

No funeral services can take place in church. Graveside funerals should now be understood to be private funerals with no more than ten immediate family and friends in attendance, and with social distancing practised among mourners not of the same household. Clergy and others duly licensed may preside at funerals in crematoria, at which we expect numbers to be strictly limited by the crematoria authorities, with hygiene precautions specified by the authorities, and with social distancing practised among mourners.

## **Marriage**

Marriages or marriage blessings can no longer take place in churches. If a couple wish to marry because of an extreme pastoral emergency, it may be possible to obtain an Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Licence, and clergy should discuss the matter with their diocesan bishop before then contacting the Archbishop of Canterbury's Faculty Office at [faculty.office@1thesanctuary.com](mailto:faculty.office@1thesanctuary.com).

## **Baptism**

Baptisms can no longer take place in churches, and should only take place at home, hospital, hospice or other location in case of an extreme pastoral emergency, where baptism may be administered by a lay person. The order for emergency baptism is appended below.

## **Prayer and witness**

The duty of the people of God to witness to Christ is not diminished at this time; neither is our obligation to pray without ceasing for our communities and all in need. We commend all that is being done in God's service to care pastorally for our communities, and to enable worship, prayer and devotion to continue at home.

We continue to hold all who are anxious, all who are unwell, and all who are grieving in our prayers, asking that the presence of the risen Christ may be near to us all and give us assurance, peace and strength at this painful and anxious time.

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### **AN ORDER FOR EMERGENCY BAPTISM**

*In an emergency, if no ordained minister is available, a lay person may be the minister of baptism. Before baptising, the minister should ask the name of the infant / person to be baptised. If, for any reason, there is uncertainty as to the infant / person's name, the baptism can be properly administered without a name (so long as the identity of the person baptised can be duly recorded).*

*The following form is sufficient:*

*The minister pours water on the person to be baptized, saying*

I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

*Then all may say the Lord's Prayer and the Grace.*

*Any person who has administered baptism privately in an emergency should make a careful record of the date and place of baptism and of the identity of the person baptised. He / she should forward details to the parish priest as soon as possible and without delay.*

*The parish priest should ensure that the customary record is entered in the baptismal register.*

**The Bench of Bishops**  
**24 March 2020**