

<https://anglicanchurchsa.org/coronavirus-updated-guidelines-from-the-archbishop/>

## Coronavirus – Updated guidelines from the Archbishop – As at Tuesday March 24

### Dear Parishioners, Clergy and Bishops

I greet you all in Christ's name.

In view of the announcement of regulations by various governments to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus in Southern Africa, I have consulted with as many Bishops of the Province as possible in the time available and am issuing these revised guidelines to the Province.

While it is recognised that elements of the guidelines will reflect local regulations, they are aimed at best church practice – drawn also from the Church of England – for Dioceses in all countries of our Province. In humility we also offer them to other Provinces on the continent who may be affected by the pandemic, for use and adaptation as appropriate.

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**As we go forward, updates will be reflected on this page, and dates and times of each update published.** *(If you are not sure an update has loaded, “break the cache” on your computer by pressing Ctrl/F5 to reload the page.)*

### **UPDATE: MARCH 24, 06:00**

The national “stay-at-home” lockdown that the Government will impose in South Africa from midnight on Thursday will test as never before our capacity as a church to innovate and share with one another.

But it will not prevent us from ministering to one another, and since our churches are now effectively closed, I have a simple request if at all possible:

**At midday, every day, please could we ring our church bells around Southern Africa for 10 or 15 seconds as a signal to those, in every country in our Province, who are ill or live in fear, despair and perhaps anger, assuring them that God is here, that He loves us, that we are not alone and that this too shall pass.**

It would also be a wonderful way of demonstrating our presence, our solidarity with our communities, and the fact that we are praying and worshipping at home.

If you are at home, pause whatever you are doing, and clink a glass or cup to ring the same message out to yourselves and your loved ones, resurrecting the use of the Angelus and saying this prayer:

*God bless the world,*

*Give it wisdom at this time,*

*Grant us relief and release,*

*Be with those who are ill,*

*And bless the carers fighting this pandemic,*

*For Jesus Christ's sake,*

*Amen*

This time of great anxiety and stress in the world, where tomorrows are not certain for so many, is one when we need God's presence more than ever. We need to acknowledge to ourselves that the fear and anxiety created by the novel coronavirus and by COVID-19 will have long-term effects on us.

We will never be able to know now what the psychological effects on us will be in the future – on how we view ourselves – and on society at large. That is why in my messaging I am asking people to take seriously their psychological and emotional well-being.

Develop a spirituality of caring for yourself and those around you. Regard what health officials are calling “self-isolation” as a form of retreat in which you can pursue a ministry of prayer. Meditation and prayer are also a way of feeding the people of God.

And please reach out to others, especially the vulnerable and those who live in parishes which are materially poorer than yours. It is not clear as I write what leeway the Government will allow clergy, lay ministers and devoted parishioners to minister outside their homes, but please reach out by phone, by WhatsApp groups and chats, by Skype or other means to a parish in your Diocese which may not have as many resources as yours, and see whether you can find a way of meeting their needs.

Bishops and clergy, please do say Mass with one or two others in your household, or even alone, for the people of God wherever you are and especially if your Rectory is on or next to your Church premises. If you can, find a way of transmitting this electronically for those who want to watch or listen at home.

I have asked the Bishops to form diocesan teams, and parishes their own teams, to consult with one another to develop and share ideas for ministry. These will be received by a Provincial team so that we can derive by shared effort best practice for the church instead of pulling back in fear. And there may be practical steps we can take for the health authorities in future, such as opening our churches as testing centres or simply to feed the homeless and the needy.

*Keep safe, take good care of yourself,*

*Wash your hands often and thoroughly,*

*and God bless you and keep you.*

PS: I have learned reliably overnight that we will continue to be able to hold funerals, under the strict guidelines previously announced: no more than 100 mourners and strict adherence to the new public health practices – social distancing, hand-washing or sanitizing, no hand-shaking etc.

