

DIOCESE IN EUROPE

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

The Venerable Meurig Williams
Archdeacon of France & Monaco
Commissary & Chaplain to the Bishop in Europe



13th March 2020

Dear Colleagues

Covid 19 Virus and Arrangements in our Churches in France

Following yesterday evening's statement by President Emmanuel Macron, a number of chaplaincies have been in touch requesting clarification, particularly in relation to the question of whether church services should continue to be held.

As you might expect, the advice from the Church of England will be in line with any measures announced by the UK government and will not take account of any restrictions announced by other jurisdictions.

It is important that our churches follow the Church of England guidelines as they relate to worship in our churches, most specifically the suspension of sharing the peace through physical contact; and the distribution of communion in one kind only.

It is equally important that our churches follow the guidelines and all restrictions announced both by the French government and your local *Prefecture* – not least because some *departements* have announced additional restrictions e.g. in Oise, Bas-Rhin and Morbihan. In addition, where you use church buildings belonging to other Christian denominations, you should also follow the guidelines issued by those churches i.e. usually either the Catholic Bishops Conference or the *Eglise Protestante Unie de France*, as relevant to your situation.

Irrespective of guidelines and restrictions issued by the French authorities, Chaplains and Wardens have the authority to decide whether to continue with public worship and other events in the light of local circumstances. In that sense, I would encourage you to exercise whatever caution you consider appropriate and necessary.

For those of you with the necessary technology, you might wish to consider either live-streaming worship or recording services (or a sermon and some prayers) for later listening. Here's some helpful advice from the Church of England on this:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/digital-labs/labs-learning-blog/beginners-guide-going-live-your-service-or>

The following link gives an idea of how one of our chaplaincies in the Diocese has responded in this way.

<https://europe.anglican.org/main/latest-news/post/1548-virtual-eucharist-in-geoa>

Elsewhere in the EU (and in a sister province of the Anglican Communion) Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin has announced that, although closed for worship, its Sunday Eucharist will be live streamed live via its website.

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All Anglican churches in Belgium (where clergy stipends are partly paid by the State) have followed the Belgian Catholic Church's guidance that Anglican churches should be closed for worship for this coming Sunday at least.

I would also encourage you to keep in touch people who are either self-isolating, or living in remote areas and are likely to experience isolation as a result of the suspension of church services, by telephone or skype. Where people are self-isolating, or have contracted the virus, any pastoral contact should be by telephone or skype.

Above all, it is important that we take responsibility for our own health and well-being by observing advice in relation to basic hygiene and social contact, avoiding unnecessary travel, and generally ensuring that we do not put ourselves or others at risk.

I will keep you updated if and when the situation develops further.

This comes with every blessing and good wish during this uncertain time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Newing", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

With and on behalf of my colleagues Canon Giles Williams, Canon Debbie Flach and the Reverend Tony Lomas.

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