

The Bishop of Blackburn
The Rt Revd Julian T Henderson

Dear all

As you know, the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus has been in the news around the world recently and despite our hopes, it is becoming more of a possibility that a sizeable outbreak may occur in the UK.

The Church of England as a whole is following the official Government advice in relation to Coronavirus (specifically from Public Health England). This can be found on our website [here](#), along with a number of things that I encourage you to think about regarding best practice going forward.

At present there are no suggestions that services and/or other church-related gatherings should be curtailed. However sensible precautions in all activities are advised and more about this can be found via the website page link above.

Most of the questions I have received have been about two key areas: the sharing of the peace and the sharing of the chalice. There has been no advice nationally to withdraw from either of these practices, however, people must be allowed to avoid participation if they so wish. I know that a number of you have put in place a sharing of a peace which removes the shaking of the hands but instead focusses on eye-contact. This is perfectly acceptable and may soon become the preferred option. Similarly, if someone does not wish to drink from the chalice, they must be made to feel able to make that decision; remembering that to receive the sacrament in one kind is to receive it fully.

The need for good hygiene practices remains a key part in the celebration of communion and hand washing should continue to be done both thoroughly and visibly, using alcohol-based gel if possible.

Bishop's House will monitor advice that is given from a number of sources and will update the website linked above when necessary and will be in contact via direct email at least weekly whilst this remains an issue in our country. The advice given nationally comes from experts in their field and is updated regularly.

Please join with me in praying for all of those affected by the virus. Pray remembering God's sovereignty over all things and continue to act always in a way which protects the vulnerable and dispels fear.

As ever

