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- New information regarding suspending the administration of the common Cup/Chalice as well as physical contact during the sharing of the peace, blessing or "laying on of hands".

The Government has published a coronavirus action plan. We will review this and update the guidance on this page as needed.

All guidance will continue to reflect appropriate Public Health advice.

The threat posed by COVID-19 has been assessed by the Chief Medical Officer as 'moderate'. This permits the Government to plan for all eventualities. The risk to individuals remains low.

Guidance for churches

Current Government advice is that individuals should follow good hygiene practices including:

- carrying tissues and using them to catch coughs and sneezes, and binning the tissue;
- washing hands with soap and water (for 20 seconds) or using sanitiser gel to kill germs.

Advice has also been issued to travellers who have returned to the UK from a number of countries.

Anyone who has returned to the UK from any of these areas in the last 14 days and develops symptoms of cough or fever or shortness of breath, should immediately:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu;
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the country.

It is our view, in light of the continued increase of COVID-19 cases in the United Kingdom, that it is now necessary to suspend the administration of the chalice as well as physical contact during the sharing of the peace, blessing or "laying on of hands". We therefore advise that all priests should:

- Offer Communion in one kind only to all communicants i.e. the consecrated bread/wafer/host, with the priest alone taking the wine;
- suspend handshaking or other direct physical contact during the sharing of the peace;
- suspend direct physical contact as part of a blessing or 'laying on of hands'.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have written to clergy to update on this guidance.

It is also best practice for churches to have hand-sanitisers available for parishioners to use.

In addition, priests presiding at the Eucharist, communion administrators and servers should wash their hands, preferably with an alcohol-based (minimum 60%) hand-sanitiser.

Intinction (dipping the bread) is not recommended (even by celebrants or communion-administrators) as this represents an infection transmission route as well as a risk to those with certain allergies.

Best hygiene practice should continue to be observed in all pastoral contacts.