



THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

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Pastoral Letter (Number 2) in Response to COVID-19

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Since my Pastoral Letter and Email of last week, guidelines relating to the COVID-19 pandemic have advanced significantly as we attempt to respond effectively to this crisis. In the light of that, I offer some further advice here, some of which will contradict what I said last week, in order to comply with the changing expectations of governments and health authorities.

Places of Worship

The current Commonwealth and NSW State government directives now stipulate that places of worship are to be closed to the public. These directives are intended to deter groups of people gathering in one place.

New South Wales has determined that places of public worship be closed except for the purposes of conducting wedding services or funeral services. A place of public worship includes outdoor areas.

The NSW Government has decreed that places of public worship are not to be open to members of the public for private prayer.

My advice from last week still applies in relation to weddings and funerals, but it is now clear that in NSW the exception for weddings and funerals *does not extend to Baptisms*. You will therefore need to refrain from conducting services of Baptism (except in cases of emergency). While the official number of persons allowable at a funeral or wedding is still 100, for the sake of caution and to ensure social distancing, I ask that where weddings and funerals need to take place, that a maximum of 20 persons be allowed to attend the gathering. Good hygiene and social distancing measures (as outlined above) must be observed in all church activities.

Live streaming and Online Options

I know that you are enabling people to access online church services and I'm really encouraged by the quality and variety of options that you have been able to share in a very short space of time. Please note however that there are a few things to keep in mind.

Only those involved in the production of the online services or church worship should be attendance.

See the link below on the Church of England site which provides practical advice on live streaming.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/digital-labs/labs-learning-blog/beginners-guide-going-live-your-service-or>. You might also give some thought to



how you could livestream from a location other than the church, should further restrictions be imposed in the near future.

If you are livestreaming, you should ensure that your ministry unit has its own individual CCLI Church **Copyright** live streaming licence. This licence allows you to stream or podcast your live-recorded worship service music on your church's website or other streaming services. Group licences are currently not available. Further details see <https://au.ccli.com/copyright-licences/>.

Copyright for the use of material from **A Prayer Book for Australia** should be acknowledged during live streaming and a graphic added to the end of any published videos.

As to **music**, those who are using contemporary songs will need to purchase a licence via CCLI as noted above. Those who are using traditional hymns played live rather than recordings should not require permission if the music is in the public domain, which much of it is. Choral music will need to be in the public domain otherwise a licence will be required.

Parish Offices and Other Ministries

Advice is that our offices are **not** considered non-essential, as the church and its ministry is considered "an organisation of compassion". However, we need to keep reviewing this as the situation changes. Unless this is contradicted by further government announcements, you would do well to try to keep your office open, but maybe not at full strength so that social distancing is observed. This will enable people to access the ministry of the church if required and for the receipt of financial offerings. It is still permissible for staff to work onsite in Church buildings and for a small team to meet for the purpose of livestreaming a service (with appropriate social distancing).

Small groups, meeting in homes, may continue with appropriate social distancing. However, many homes will not be large enough to accommodate more than 5 people. If you haven't already, it would be wise to prepare now for virtual small groups as it may not be possible to gather face to face at all in the future.

National Anglican Guidelines

The Anglican Church of Australia has released a set of National Guidelines in response to COVID-19 that are to be found on the General Synod Office website. They provide more detail in relation to other parish activities. <https://anglican.org.au/resources/covid-19/application-within-dioceses-recommended-standards/>

Steering Group Meetings and Submissions relating to the Restructure

The person to liaise with in relation to any questions about Steering Group meetings and submissions is the Chair of your Steering Group. Following the Bishop in Council meeting this Thursday 26 March, the Registrar will communicate with Steering Groups about any changes to the restructure process and timings.

General Synod and Lambeth 2020

The Archbishop of Canterbury advised the bishops today that Lambeth 2020 has been postponed until 2021. It is very likely that the Australian General Synod will also be postponed.



Looking out for each other

These are unprecedented circumstances, and it is understandable that clergy and others will have questions, concerns and anxieties about their circumstances and individual situations. I know that many are worried about the ability of parishes to meet the costs of running the parish, including of course the payment of stipends if and when giving levels drop. This will be discussed at Bishop in Council this week and we'll communicate with you when we have decided on a way forward. But we will not always know of or understand everyone's individual situations. If you don't know what to do, or have worries or concerns, please ask for help! This is not the time to try to do it all alone.

I will continue to take advice from key government and health authorities in managing our responses and actions and will continue to pray for you and your communities.

"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (*Philippians 4:4-7*). May we too find the peace that God offers in an anxious world.

Yours in Christ,

Dr Murray Harvey
Bishop of Grafton

