

**13 March 2020**

Dear St Bede's

I'm writing to you in relation to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Last week the Archbishop wrote to all Rectors/Wardens in the Sydney Diocese with recommendations about how we should conduct our ministries in light of the current situation. The Archbishop's recommendations are made in light of the Commonwealth Department of Health advice: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronaviruses-2019-ncov-health-alert#current-status>.

If you have immediate concerns, please call Jeremy or me, or contact one of the following sites

Feeling sad, depressed, anxious – [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)  
World Health Organisation – [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)  
Financial Assistance – [www.anglicare.org.au](http://www.anglicare.org.au)

Jeremy and I have been in regular discussions as to our response to the Coronavirus and I met with my wardens this morning to discuss our communal response. I am now writing to let you know about the safety measures we have decided to put in place.

Our response reflects the fact that as much as possible we want to continue our ministry to one another with as little disruption as possible. Yet, at the same time, we recognise that there are some in our church who for a variety of reasons are particularly at risk. Our response is a genuine attempt to love one another (1 John 4:10). And not just loving fellow members of St Bede's, but also loving our wider community, as Jesus would have us do (Luke 15:26-37).

Saying this, can I encourage you to be in regular contact with those you might not have seen for a little while: those you know who are unwell, in retirement or nursing homes or those with underlying medical conditions. This might just be the opportunity you've been needing to give someone a call.

The measures that I am about to explain for some will be an overreaction. After all, Australia is relatively isolated compared to some parts of the world and the chance of contracting Coronavirus is low. For others, the measures may not go far enough. Wherever you fall on this continuum, I would ask that you also 'bear with one another in brotherly love' (Colossians 3:13).

### **A Prayer**

Let me encourage you to take however you feel to God in prayer. You might want to pray the following.

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for creating us to know you and to be known by you. We thank you that you have revealed yourself to us most clearly in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that Jesus was not afraid to get his hands dirty and came to his world to redeem and give hope. Father, we praise you for the Lord Jesus. At this difficult time, help us not to fear but rather have faith that you are in control of all things. Lord, give us opportunities to demonstrate the hope we have in you to our family, friends and anyone who crosses our path. Lord, we pray for those who are unwell. Bring healing to their bodies. We pray for those who are caring for them. Give them skill, wisdom and compassion. Father, for scientific bodies and pharmaceutical companies working on treatments, give success. Finally, Lord, we thank you that we have a glorious future that awaits all those who trust in you. Help us to cling to that hope, in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Our Response**

Our response to Coronavirus comes under various headings. Please take the time to read through each one as it impacts you. If you have any questions or comments about any of this, please be in touch.

### **If You're Unwell**

Please stay at home if you are unwell. Even if you don't think you are infectious, if you have a runny nose, sore throat, temperature, flu-symptoms or if you have been in contact with someone who has Coronavirus, please stay home. If you have been advised by a medical professional to self-isolate, then please do that until your isolation period has finished. If you are staying away, please do let us know so we can be in touch with you via the phone.

## **Hand Washing**

One of the best ways to deal with Coronavirus is to wash your hands regularly with warm, soapy water. Please use the facilities here at church and make sure your children do the same. We will be making hand sanitizer available too on your way into church.

## **Touching**

As per health department guidelines, please refrain from hugging, kissing, hand-shaking during this period. While you might think this is going too far, there might be others who are nervous about coming to church because of the virus. So let's do our best to consider one another.

## **Communion**

We will no longer be using the common cup at communion until further notice. We will continue to use the individual cups and bread but will keep the individual cups with the bread on the table. As has been my custom for years, I (and whoever is assisting me) will sanitize my hands prior to distribution. Whoever is preparing communion will use food handling gloves from now on.

## **Food Service**

Those on morning tea or preparing food for playgroup, community or discipleship groups are asked to wash and sanitize their hands before preparing food. Individual plates should be used rather than a bowl of food in the centre of the table. Food handling gloves and tongs should be used when preparing food for all ministries here at church (these will be on the kitchen bench). I appreciate that this will make food preparation slower and more difficult but another opportunity to show patience with one another. Parents are asked to pay special attention to children and assist them at morning tea.

## **Collection**

We will still be handing around the collection bags during services. However, as much as possible, the people collecting the money will be walking along the aisles to minimise handing the bag from person to person. An alternative is direct deposit giving. Can I encourage you to setup that up through your bank? That's what Emily and I do. If you prefer to give 'physically' then the bags will be on the table at the back of the church for your donation. There will also be a Paypal option for those who want to 'tap'. Those counting the money are asked to wash their hands after counting.

## **Kids and Youth**

For sign in and sign out, one person will be responsible for this (the leader of Beedles or whatever ministry is being attended). Everything that is used for kids' ministry is sprayed with disinfectant after use – pens, toys etc.

## **Finally...**

There may be other measures we need to take as the situation changes. The wardens and I appreciate your understanding as we seek to take a measured and sensible approach to this situation.

With God's blessing,  
St Bede's Ministry Team

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