

Coronavirus – Updated guidelines from the Archbishop – As at Wednesday April 1

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LATEST UPDATE BELOW POSTED ON APRIL 1, 2020



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UPDATE: APRIL 1, 06:40

Dear Parishioners, Clergy and Bishops

Yesterday we asked men's and women's groups in the Church, as well as religious communities, to join us in praying during this time of the coronavirus. Mothers' Union, can you please also devote your Thursday prayers to the crisis, over and above other times? We also asked the youth and servers, as well as other young people's formations, to create prayer platforms. Perhaps our young people could add their voices to the calls for the cost of data to be reduced during this period of shutdown?

Multichoice (DStv) has approached the churches with their plan to launch a special Easter channel to bring Good Friday to Easter to God's people across the continent. They will create a pop-up channel – Channel 344 – from Thursday April 9 to Monday April 13, accommodating denominations including ours. We will share more information when it is available.

The Bishopscourt staff, including the Provincial Executive Office and the Media Office, continue to enable my ministry during this time, for which I am thankful to God. The Media Office has added to and re-arranged our Resource page, and asks you to keep on sharing your Facebook pages and any tweets that you send out. Let's use the hashtag #acsaworship on what we publish so fellow Anglicans at home can follow and share. You can find the Resource page here:

<https://anglicanchurchsa.org/coronavirus-resources-for-prayer-and-worship/>

Please support the Government in the crucially important mass community tracing, screening, testing and treatment programmes, announced for South Africa by President Ramaphosa on Monday. If asked, please help the health authorities in whatever way you can. I am spending these days in a

“semi-retreat” and come out only in the evenings to work on those updates. It is for me a period of intense prayer and lament.

In the past, Jeremiah has for me best described what it is to lament. ‘Cry aloud to the Lord!’ he writes in his Lamentations, ‘Let tears stream down like a torrent day and night ... Arise, cry in the night, at the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord!’ (Lam 2:18,19).

But lamenting does not only have negative connotations. Denise Ackermann has written that lamenting “...is a refusal to settle for the way things are. It is reminding God that the human situation is not as it should be and that God as the partner in the covenant must act.” In exploring lamentation, we trust that the incarnate, second person of the Trinity, God who took human form, is always with us as we discern his way in struggling with the contemporary issues of our day. We must thus act courageously, “recklessly confident” that nothing will separate us from God’s love.

Lamenting helps us build hope – as I wrote in my book Faith & Courage:

“I am not speaking of hope in the sense of an anaesthetic administered to dull the throbbing pain of the everyday reality of inequality and indifference to suffering. As... Denise Ackermann says, hope ‘is not that blithe sense that all will end well... because human progress is guaranteed’. No, hope is a determination, a conviction that seeks to name our problems and highlight our differences, precisely in order to mobilize people to overcome them. As Ackermann adds: ‘To live out my hope is to try to make that which I hope for come about – sooner rather than later.’ It is ‘never to surrender our power to imagine a better world’.”

These updates will become shorter and shorter as I spend more time in the next few days listening to God rather than talking and writing. I hear God saying daily to me, “Thabo, be still and know that I am Lord,” as I lift up mine eyes daily to God from whence my hope comes.

Do pray for those who have died COVID-19 related deaths in Southern Africa, and for those infected and under treatment.

God bless you, and keep safe.

As we go forward, updates will be reflected on this page, and dates and times of each update published. (If you are not sure an update has loaded, “break the cache” on your computer by pressing Ctrl/F5 to reload the page.)

UPDATE: MARCH 31, 05:30

With Day Five of South Africa’s lockdown – and Day Two of Lesotho’s three-week lockdown – beginning today, Tuesday, our people and parishes are starting to look ahead to Holy Week and Easter.

But before I write about that, a reminder about following the South African Health Department's basic guidelines, including those on staying at home, on social distancing when you shop for food or medical supplies, on hand-washing (for 20 seconds) or sanitizing, and sneezing or coughing into a tissue and then throwing it away. You can find comprehensive advice on the [Department of Health's special website](#)>> Please read it and follow the advice and the compulsory regulations.

We managed to get a [special ACSA Resources page](#) up on the website at the weekend, with a range of advice, ideas, prayers, forms and examples of service etc. in text, audio, video and poster format. By Sunday, the Resources page was offering links to a number of services webcast live, and archived for later viewing, including services run on the principles of social distancing. You can find the Resources page here:

Please share your own ideas and practices with others, at anglicanmediasa@gmail.com . Our staff resources are stretched, so the quickest way of getting your ideas onto the page – and of readers seeing them – is if you send links to your own blogs, Facebook pages, YouTube or SoundCloud channels.

We'll continue to update the Resources page with any new links to services we find for Palm Sunday. On Monday of Holy Week, the Bishops of the Province will connect using video-conferencing software to say the Angelus together, as well as to offer prayers for our countries, our continent and the world.

Through Holy Week, I appeal to the Anglican Women's Fellowship, the Mothers' Union, the Bernard Mizeki Men's Guild and similar groups to don their uniforms, and for members of religious houses their habits, and to organise WhatsApp and other social media groups for prayer until Easter.

On Maundy Thursday, the clergy in the Diocese of Cape Town, instead of gathering to renew their vows, will also join a video-conference to say the Angelus and offer prayers for the Diocese, the city, South Africa, Africa and the world. I appeal to you, the clergy and people of our parishes, to link up via groups such as those on WhatsApp and elsewhere and do the same during Holy Week.

Led by the South African Council of Churches, the country's religious leaders have reached an agreement with the SABC to step up their religious programming in the coming weeks. We Anglicans are on the schedule for a service on Easter Sunday – I'll share more details with you when I know them. In your own parishes, perhaps you can consider opportunities for joint ecumenical and interfaith worship.

Let me end on a note on ministry, and then with an invitation.

As clergy and laity, we need to reflect on the meaning of ministry in "a time of coronavirus" and on what it means for the future, covering a number of scenarios. If the lockdown has to be extended, how do we plan for that? If that graph showing the exponential growth in the spread of the virus continues to shoot up, what preparations do we need to make? Could we help the Government by opening churches for testing or other purposes? If the curve flattens – and we pray that it will – how has this crisis enabled us to rethink our pastoral plans and our vision of ministry? What have we been missing, how has the world changed, and how do we respond?

Now the invitation: I challenge you all, clergy or lay people, to explore your own creativity as you pray, meditate and worship at home in the coming weeks. Is there a new Collect that you've had in the back of your mind for a while? Write it down and hone it for use in your parish. Or a song, or a hymn? Consider working on new contextual liturgies and prayers for this season and beyond. The key is: be imaginative! Be bold! Be original!

God bless
