



20 March 2020

Diocesan response to COVID-19 coronavirus

Priests in charge of the parishes and other key leaders of the Diocese of Bendigo met yesterday with the Bishop to discuss a coordinated response to the COVID-19 coronavirus.

All are keen to clearly state our determination to be present and available to our communities throughout this testing time. Yet there is a recognition that the measures designed to limit the spread of the virus must open the way for a relaxed routine in which new opportunities to serve others are taken up, and small groups are empowered to minister.

In this light, public services are pausing for the time being. This reprioritizing of energy will allow parishes to be accessible in a flexible manner to allow for prayer, encouragement and worship. Please see your local parish to see how these safe opportunities will be available in your area.

Radio and various forms of visual media will be used to provide diocesan worship services that will become available to all irrespective of their capacity to come outside of the home. It is expected that this will utilize the talents of many around the Diocese and become available in the coming weeks.

Op-shops run by Anglican parishes in the Diocese will close subject to the development of plans to adequately meet the risks COVID-19 presents to staff, volunteers and shoppers. The development of a plan to allow for the distribution of food to those who require help is to be prioritized.

Similarly face to face ministry to children and youth is to pause. We are developing opportunities to allow young people and their families to work together during this potentially isolating time using digital and other media. We look forward to making these known soon.

We pray for all of those who form the front line of care across the community and thank God for their selfless service. We also encourage people to lift up their needs to God who is capable and kind and commend this prayer from the National Council of Churches.

Gracious God,

We give thanks anew for your providence and presence.

We prayerfully seek your grace, amidst COVID-19 here and overseas.

We pray for those in need of healing.

We pray for your peace with those who are anxious or grieving.

We pray you will continue to strengthen and sustain all those who are serving in response.

We pray for your Holy Spirit's discernment amidst the many choices and decisions facing our national, community and medical leaders.

We pray we each might see quickly what more we can do to help those who are vulnerable.

This prayer for our nation in the family of nations, with all that is on our hearts, we gather now and pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'thatt'.