

GUIDANCE REGARDING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Version 6

Updated 9 April 2020



Full Version

STAY HOME, SAVE LIVES

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

As you will be aware, the situation regarding Coronavirus is changing on an almost daily basis, and this guidance will be updated accordingly as the need arises.

The World Health Organisation has deemed COVID-19 as a pandemic, and the UK Government maintains the current risk level as 'high'. The guidance below will be updated as the situation changes.

Guidance for parishes:

Firstly, we pray for all those directly and indirectly affected by the current COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak, as well as for their families, loved ones and communities.

We would like to reassure our congregations that The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London has established a Medical Response Group that closely monitors information and guidance from Public Health England (PHE), including the daily Government briefings from Downing Street, the Chief Medical Officer, and other relevant authorities. This includes working closely with Coptic Orthodox dioceses and other denominational groups in Britain as well as medical practitioners and policy advisers, to ensure a coordinated response within our Churches, keep communities safe, and put plans in place to manage any risks safely and proportionately.

We have also established two new groups to ensure that services are provided for all those in need:

- The first is the **Diocesan Response Group**. This is a cross-diocese group that looks towards the strategies of supporting the diocese, parishes and individuals, and to provide a network for all those assisting in a variety of ways.
- The second is our **Diocesan Digital Platforms Group**. This is again a cross-diocese group that has been instrumental in the establishment of the various digital platforms providing services ranging from Sunday School to prayer meetings and Liturgies, and is currently taking the lead on preparations for the sharing of Holy Week and the Holy Resurrection Feast prayers and resources.

The most current advice from the UK Government, PHE and the Chief Medical Officer remains that (Source: NHS.uk) everyone must stay at home to help stop the spread of coronavirus, and to take pressure off the NHS.

You should only leave your home for very limited purposes:

- *shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible*
- *one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle – alone or with members of your household*
- *any medical need, including to donate blood, avoid or escape risk of injury or harm, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person*
- *travelling for work purposes, but only where you cannot work from home*

Important

- *These reasons are exceptions – even when doing these activities, you should be minimising time spent outside of the home and ensuring you are 2 metres apart from anyone outside of your household.*

Coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like heart disease, diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease amongst others. The current guidance from Public Health England is available online [here](#) and this information is updated daily.

If you need medical assistance or guidance, use the 111 online coronavirus service or call 111 to find out what to do next.

The key points of this guidance are:

1. Liturgical Services

- Other than over the coming Holy Week and Resurrection Feast period (further details outlined later in this document), there will be a single Liturgical Service streamed from each parish on Sundays only.
- All Liturgical services will be officiated by clergy only (a maximum of two) practicing with appropriate social distancing.
 - For parishes with only one priest, he will be accompanied by one nominated deacon (without rotation), to minimise risk of infection.

2. Holy Communion

The Eucharist will continue to temporarily be administered as per our previous Guidance Version 5, dated 18 March 2020.

3. Ministries, Meetings and Christian Education

For the time being, all of our: Church meetings, Bible studies, fellowship meetings, prayer meetings, Sunday School, Sunday School activities and any other related meeting will be moved to a virtual platform. Please ask your parish for details.

4. Holy Week and Feast of the Resurrection Services

Please refer to www.CopticOrthodox.London/OnlineChurch for all details and updates

Date	Service	Time	Location	Link to Livestream to watch
10 Apr	Last Friday of Lent	10am-2pm	St Mark, Kensington for entire Diocese	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
11 Apr	Lazarus Saturday Liturgy	9:30am-11:30am	St Mary & Archangel Michael, Golders Green for entire Diocese	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
11 Apr	Palm Sunday Vespers	6pm-7:15pm	St Mary & St Shenouda, Coulsdon for entire Diocese	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
12 Apr	Palm Sunday Liturgy	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please consult your parish for livestream link.
12 Apr	Evening Pascha	6:30pm-9pm	Joint service: St George Cathedral and Parishes together	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
13 Apr	Morning Pascha	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please consult your parish for livestream link
13 Apr	Evening Pascha	6:30pm-9pm	Joint service: St George Cathedral and Parishes together	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
14 Apr	Morning Pascha	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please refer to your parish for livestream link
14 Apr	Evening Pascha	6:30pm-9pm	Joint service: St George Cathedral and Parishes together	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
15 Apr	Morning Pascha	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please refer to your parish for livestream link.
15 Apr	Evening Pascha	6:30pm-9pm	Joint service: St George Cathedral and Parishes together	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
16 Apr	Laqan Service	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please refer to your parish for livestream link.
16 Apr	Covenant Thursday Liturgy	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please refer to your parish for livestream link.
16 April	Evening Pascha	6:30pm-9pm	Joint service: St George Cathedral and Parishes together	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese
17 Apr	Good Friday	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please refer to your parish for livestream link
18-19 Apr	Bright Saturday Vigil	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please refer to your parish for livestream link.
19 Apr	Resurrection Liturgy	Please consult your parish	Streamed by parishes	Please refer to your parish for livestream link
20 Apr	Easter Monday	9:30am-11:30am	St Mary & Pope Kyrellos for entire Diocese	https://tinyurl.com/CopticDiocese

All services will be officiated by clergy only (a maximum of two) practicing with appropriate social distancing. For parishes with only one priest, he will be accompanied by one nominated deacon (without rotation), to minimise risk of infection.

A message from His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos:

“As Holy Week approaches, a time at which we typically gather in our parishes, we will continue to gather in heart and in spirit through prayer and our various online resources that are now available to us. Thanks to our wonderful clergy and our committed Diocesan Digital Platforms Group, arrangements have been made for this coming Season to allow us all to pray together in our parishes and as a diocese.

After consultation with our Clergy Council, we have decided that Evening Pascha services will be streamed directly from St George Cathedral and virtually incorporating the priests, cantors and readers and parishes of the Diocese, so that we can all lift up our hearts together. So as to minimise travel, look after our Clergy and not duplicate efforts, certain services will be streamed from one parish for us all to share and enjoy.

I know that this year will feel very different, but remember that we are continuing to commemorate the same Passion of the same Risen Lord as we have throughout the two thousand years of the Church.

I pray that this be a blessed time for you all, that you stay safe in your households, and that you refrain from unnecessary movement so as to stop the spread of this deadly virus, and to alleviate pressure on our National Health Service and on those who serve it so selflessly, and will continue to do so throughout these festive days.

With the observance of this and any updated guidance, and with heightened care for those around you and yourselves, I encourage you to live in a spirit of fellowship and be a source of reassurance and comfort to those around you; praying together for all those in Britain and around the world currently affected, those vulnerable and at risk, those anxious and struggling, and for policy-makers and frontline and support healthcare professionals entrusted with our care. We pray for God’s healing for those affected, that our Lord may keep us all safe, and bless our parishes and the world around us as we journey together in unity.”

Official online sources for Coronavirus updates:

- **Current NHS Guidance:**
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- **Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Twitter updates**
https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
- **Government information** (updated 2pm every day):
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>