

Update on Swine Flu

Issued to Clergy and Churchwardens in the Diocese of Salisbury

Dated – 14 July 2009

While the current strain of swine flu remains mild, there is clear evidence that it is likely to become quite widespread in the United Kingdom. There have been very few deaths; however it is also evident that mild as it is the current strain can pose a serious health risk to those who are most vulnerable.

Hygiene Precautions

The Bishop emphasises the advice already issued as attached

- Take good care of your own health
- Be vigilant in personal hygiene
- Be prepared to help in neighbouring parishes

The Bishop also directs the following precautions be taken to reduce the risk of the spread of swine flu.

1. Churches should continue to take services and conduct business as normal. At this point there are no recommendations about change to local practice with regard to sharing the Peace. However all should be encouraged to observe **good hand hygiene**. It may be helpful to have an alcoholic rub available for people to use on coming into church.
2. For the duration of the current situation, **only consecrated bread** (of whatever kind is the customary practice in the local church) **should be offered** to those receiving communion. Clergy should emphasize that while communion in both kinds is the norm in the Church of England, in faithfulness to Christ's institution, when it is received only in one kind the fullness of the Sacrament is received none the less. President and sacristan should either wash their hands with soap and water or use an antibacterial gel before preparing or distributing the bread
3. **Both bread and wine should be consecrated** and the President must receive communion in both kinds. The chalice should also be available at a different communion point for those who still wish to receive in both kinds.
4. Please note that **neither intinction** (where the consecrated bread is dipped in the wine by either the ministrant or communicant) **nor** giving the consecrated **bread directly onto the tongue should be used in the current situation**. These customs increase the possibility of spreading the virus.
5. Please do give clear advice (in Sunday Notices, parish magazines etc) to **members of your congregation who may be showing flu-like symptoms to follow Government advice** and stay at home while symptoms persist. (Symptoms do not normally last for more than 7-10 days.) Do also keep in touch with them during this period by phone and ensure they feel welcomed back when they have recovered.
6. **Pastoral visits and Home Communion** for people who have swine flu by clergy or lay pastoral assistants are strongly discouraged. Contact by telephone, internet, or other means is to be encouraged! The risk of infection is very high, and a priest making a series of pastoral visits could spread infection, as well as being susceptible to becoming infected.

7. When a pastoral visit is necessary then **great care must be taken to prevent exposure** to the virus and to ensure it is not passed on to others – especially those who are most vulnerable.
8. **If you suffer from swine flu yourself**, please be sensible and follow medical advice. If you have flu like symptoms, then contact your GP by phone and follow the advice given. Look to help from colleagues while you take time off to recover. Please let your rural dean know so that they can monitor the situation locally.
9. Please also ask members of the congregation to **be vigilant in watching out among friends and neighbours**, especially those who are on their own or in any way vulnerable.

For further information please contact John Wraw, Archdeacon of Wilts via the Ramsbury Office – adwilts@salisbury.anglican.org 01380 729808

Prayers

Please do remember all who are ill at this time; but some may find the following prayer helpful for the current situation.

**Sovereign God,
the defence of those who trust in you
and the strength of those who suffer:
look with mercy on us at this time:
bring healing to those infected with the virus,
give wisdom and insight to doctors, nurses and health professionals,
and bring calm and peace to all within our nation,
through our mighty Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

From: the Bishops, Dean, Archdeacons and Diocesan Secretary.