

Dear all

The changes announced by the NSW Premier enable us to make some changes to our pastoral practices. From Friday 1 May, clergy and lay people can undertake visiting ministries as a result of changes to the restrictions in NSW. It will be possible for up to 2 adults and their dependent children to visit another household.

You should not visit if you feel unwell even if you only have mild symptoms such as tiredness or a sore throat. This direction is based on the risk of us transmitting the virus while being unaware that we are infected.

It is also important that **ring ahead** to ensure that the person you are visiting is able/willing to receive you and at a time that is convenient to them. You should check whether the person you are planning to visit has cold or flu-like symptoms. If they are unwell, then a phone or virtual visit should be undertaken. If they have other people visiting at the time you were planning, then make another time.

It is helpful to remember that some people have compromised immune systems and would prefer not to receive visitors at this time, so don't exert any pressure for a visit.

During your visit, you should aim to remain 1.5 metres apart. You should not shake hands, hug or kiss as a greeting. Clergy are permitted to administer Holy Communion but only if you have individual chalices/cups for each person taking part. Immediately **before** and **after** the visit you should make sure you wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub. This is essential **between** every visit. You should follow all good hygiene practices and keep a written record of the people you visit (and any others present), in case contact tracing is necessary after the event.

I also want to encourage you to be intentional in your visiting. You should plan a passage or Psalm from the Bible to read. These are very unique days, and provide a wonderful opportunity to see if people understand the gospel and have assurance of their eternal life through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. People will be open to this type of direct ministry. It may take a good 30-40 minutes of chatting before you are able to raise such matters (depending on how well you know those you are visiting), so that type of conversation won't suit a short visit. However, if you are administering communion, the communion itself will be a good opportunity to talk about the forgiveness and reconciliation which is ours through what Jesus has done.

My hope is that with so many other activities on hold, and because many of us are not currently preparing services or sermons, this lifting of restrictions will allow a lot of time for you to allocate to pastoral visiting in the coming weeks. May the Lord go before you and use this time as a very significant opportunity for house to house teaching, encouragement and prayer.

Mark

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