



Thursday 5th March 2020



British Isles Headquarters

Health Ministries
Department

British Union Conference of
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NOTIFICATION TO CHURCHES RE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

Sharon Platt-McDonald
BUC Director for Health, Women's Ministries and
Adventist Community Services

In light of the increasing spread of COVID-19 Coronavirus, we are advised to follow the directives from the Department of Health (DoH) and World Health Organisation (WHO). These can be found at the following websites:

- a) <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> & <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- b) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>
- c) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Additional guidance has also been given by the General Conference Health Ministries Department.

- d) GC/TED Document : <https://ted.adventist.org/news/1639-ted-advice-on-covid-19-health-and-mission>

The BUC Health Ministries department is working with entities across the UK and Ireland to develop an Operational Plan for church services, meetings and events. In the interim, I have formulated the following advice which I recommended for churches, to assist in the safety and wellbeing of members and visitors.

Adequate handwashing facilities

- Churches need to ensure that they have hot water in all bathrooms and kitchens and attend to hot water taps that are not working.
- Ensure a regular stock of liquid hand soap in all areas. Watered down hand soap does not promote good hygiene. Plan for an adequate stock of soap to prevent depletion.

Hand sanitizers

- Hand gels are most effective when they contain a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Hand gels that state "kills 99% bacteria and viruses" and are between 60- 95% alcohol based are best.
- Provide hand sanitizers in foyers, bathrooms, kitchens, church halls, meeting rooms.

Hygiene practices

- Carry tissues and use them to catch coughs, sneezes and wiping your nose, then carefully bin the tissue and wash your hands.
- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly.
- Regular hand washing throughout the day is advised.
- Use toilet tissue to touch toilet handles, bathroom taps and opening bathroom doors.
- Use hand sanitizers after touching surfaces.
- Use knuckles to operate light switches if concerned.
- Open doors with elbows or tissues if you are worried.

Social Distancing

The recommendation by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and department of Health (DOH) is to stand at least 1 metre (3 feet) away from people who are coughing, sneezing and sniveling. This is to avoid you breathing in tiny droplets which may contain the virus when people cough and sneeze.

Greeting each other

To protect personal space and prevent the spread of the virus, please adhere to the following:

- Avoid handshakes, hugging and kissing.
- Alternatives would be to smile, wave, nod and bow.

Announcements

Please make verbal announcements about hand hygiene and greetings as stated above and also place in the church bulletin. This needs to be undertaken on a weekly basis to ensure that visitors and members who have been absent from church, will both hear and see the announcements.

Personal behaviour

- Avoid touching your face.
- Viruses can live on surfaces for a few days. When we touch surfaces where the virus may have been deposited, then touch our eyes, nose or mouth, the virus can enter from there.

Communion Services

Please give more time for communion services in order to ensure the following:

- Adequate time given for attention to hygiene practices before and after the communion.
- Wash hands after foot washing for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly.
- Pastors and Elders breaking and distributing the emblems (bread and wine) are advised to wash hands as indicated above and use a hand sanitizer.
- Practice proper disposal of communion cups and use gloves.
- If Pastors, Elders, Deacons or Deaconesses are suffering from a cold or flu symptoms, they should not be serving communion.

Pot luck lunches and Agape Feasts

- If serving food, use disposable cutlery wrapped in serviettes. Avoid uncovered cutlery in open baskets that people dip into and search through before picking up.
- Use gloves when serving food and beverages both hot and cold.
- Have servers serve the food instead of individuals serving themselves where everyone is touching the serving spoons.
- Serve more single wrapped or packaged items where possible.
- Should a significant breakout of the virus be declared, pot luck lunches and Agape Feasts should be avoided.

Feeling unwell?

If you are unwell, please worship at home and watch services on line.

Symptoms

If you have a high temperature (38C /100.4F or above) or are concerned about a low-grade fever (37.5C – 38C), coughing and are experiencing breathing difficulties or breathlessness, ring 111 for advice.

Self-isolation

If the above symptoms are present and you are concerned you may have the virus, please remain at home and ring 111. You will be assessed and advised whether you need to be tested for the virus. Do not attend your GP practice but rather call your GP to let them know.

During self-isolation, or if quarantine is advised by a health professional, you should not use public transport, attend public places, or go into work, college, university or school. This could be for a period of 2 weeks.

Church cleaning

As the COVID-19 Coronavirus lives on surfaces for a few days, it is advised to ensure a thorough cleaning of the church premises each week.

- The church caretaker/cleaner should be advised to undertake a thorough cleaning each week attending to church benches, door handles, church rails, light switches and all surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and meeting places.
- Deacons and deaconesses may need to assist in the general cleanliness of the church environment, and attend to surface cleaning as advised above.

Older members and individuals with chronic illnesses

Sharon Platt-McDonald©-05.03.2020

It is important to keep in touch with our older members and those with ongoing health conditions during this time. They are the most vulnerable to the virus. You may need to advise them to worship at home, especially if they are frail or currently unwell.

Keeping in touch with them so they do not feel isolated is essential. You may do this through regular phone calls to see how they are doing and to ensure they have adequate resources such as food items and essential utilities.

Prayer

Let us commit to lifting up prayers for those impacted by the COVID-19 Coronavirus and the families, friends and communities who are grieving the loss of loved ones as a result.

We continue to petition God in our daily prayers as we seek His intervention to halt the spread of this virus. We stand on the power and promise of His Word in Psalm 91 as we embrace the protection that God offers us as we abide in Him.

“No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.” Psalm 91:10,11

Yours in Christ and Christian Service

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Platt-McDonald". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sharon Platt-McDonald

BUC Director for Health, Women’s Ministries and Adventist Community Services