

We all find ourselves in a very fluid situation at the moment with advice coming from the Public Health Agency (PHA) on a daily basis. We will seek to follow that advice as new information is provided to us by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. This means that events and activities both on Sundays as well as during the week are subject to change at very short notice – we will do our best to keep you informed.

We are very conscious of the fact that there are people who are at higher risk from this virus than others. So, we would ask you to observe good hand hygiene as advised by the PHA through handwashing and carrying a hand sanitiser with you. Sadly, at the time of writing, we have been unable to source adequate supplies of hand sanitisers, most likely as a result of ‘panic buying’.

The decisions we take in coming days and weeks will be designed to reduce the risk for all of us, and especially for those at higher risk. Our response may include any or all of the following, as necessary:

- cancelling weekday events and activities
- leaving offering plates at the back of the church instead of passing them round
- discouraging hand shaking and other physical gestures
- suspending coffee and tea after worship
- curtailing pastoral visits to homes, care homes and hospitals and using phone calls instead, where possible
- keeping under review activities around funerals, weddings etc.

For now, Sunday morning worship continues as normal, although we may need to revise that in the near future, but we hope and pray that it won't come to that.

There are three things we'd invite you to do with us:

1. If you, or someone living with you, feels at all unwell or out of sorts, especially with flu-like symptoms; or if you are concerned about your own situation due to underlying health issues; or if you have been advised to self-isolate, please avoid attending worship or other events until you have recovered, the risk to your own health has subsided, or your GP has said it is safe to return.
2. Watch out for others in the congregation and if you think there is anything we could do to help, please contact myself or our Pastoral Visitor, Lynn Falls, and we will see if and how we might be able to do so.
3. Join us in praying for:
 - those in the PHA, government and other public bodies who have tough decisions to make;
 - those in the medical profession who are caring for the sick;
 - those who are most at risk from the virus;
 - and those who will suffer potential hardship through not being able to work due to self-isolation, closure of their workplaces/businesses, and those separated from their families because of ‘lock-down’ or travel restrictions.

As we face these ‘unprecedented’ circumstances, let's remind ourselves of the powerful words of Ps 46:1-5 that assure us of the refuge and strength we find in the Lord. With every good wish in the Lord; your Minister, Peter Dickinson