

# ELCE COVID-19 Update

From the Executive Council – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## Hello!

This updated advice follows the British Government's new instructions about social distancing which includes the 'staying at home' directive unless for specified exempted reasons. As part of these new instructions places of worship have been closed. Baptisms and weddings are not allowed to happen. Funerals can still happen but with very limited attendance. Much of the previous ELCE COVID-19 Update 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 should still be noted but things have moved on.

## Recommendations

The Executive Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England reminds its congregations and their members and pastors of the following recommendations:

- ELCE members stay home as much as possible and delay the spread of the virus (by minimising travel and minimising 'social contact').
- ELCE churches are sadly closed at this time and all baptisms and weddings are postponed for the time being (where churches in effect have become studios for online services then the pastor can still use the building because it is a place of work).
- funerals may only be conducted according to the current government requirements in this changing situation.
- ELCE pastors and congregations be proactive in care for all members – and particularly those listed as vulnerable to this virus – and, at all times, remain conscious and active in matters of hygiene and 'social distancing'.
- any ELCE pastor in a vulnerable group or living with someone in a vulnerable group should limit his ministry and travels and help delay the virus by self isolating.
- all ELCE members immediately communicate with the pastor and congregational leaders when any symptoms are discovered or when self-isolation is happening –
- pastors contact the ELCE Chairman immediately if he or any member of his family that lives with him exhibit symptoms or are self isolating.
- pastoral visits – and these are visits by the pastor and no one else at the moment – if they occur are to be exercised with extreme care so as not to spread the virus.

This means that where people are self isolating because of symptoms or because they have been in contact with someone with symptoms that no visits happen so that the pastor does not have to then self isolate. The only exception to this might be if the pastor was wearing the same personal protection equipment as the health workers attending those with COVID-19 but remember this would only be possible if he is not living with or could be isolated from any person in a vulnerable category as listed by the Government in his own home. Overall ministry and support in this situation needs to happen via remote means – phone, Skype, Facetime, Facebook, WhatsApp, and the like.

This also means that where people are self isolating because they are in a vulnerable group and show no signs of symptoms that visits might occur provided rigorous health and hygiene practices can be followed and social distancing can occur. Where any of this is problematic then the physical visit is not to occur and other support and ministry needs to happen via remote means – phone, Skype, Facetime, Facebook, WhatsApp, and the like.

## Let's be clear

The Government advice about why we may leave our home, there being no public gatherings in public of more than two people, and the travel guidance all means that we are, unfortunately, not physically getting together – and not holding Bible Studies or meetings in homes or even going across to a member for a cup of tea – for now. Let's delay COVID-19 spreading. Thank you.

## Please remember

Social distancing! (Delay the spread!)

Many ELCE congregations are now online. Contact them for details.

The Daily Offices on **LUTHERAN RADIO UK** on Sundays now have a sermon and prayer. You can hear these services at 7:00am, 9:00am, 5:00pm, 7:00pm and 11:00pm. Go to [www.lutheranradio.co.uk](http://www.lutheranradio.co.uk) and click on Listen Live.

Thank you for reading! God bless us all.

- Pastor George Samiec