



A Message to the Clergy and Leadership of Anglican Churches in Italy

Dear Friends,

We write to you on receiving news of updated decrees issued by the Italian Government yesterday 8 March, concerning the current coronavirus emergency. The decree of the President of the Council of Ministers is clear in its Article 2.1 section v:

L'apertura dei luoghi di culto è condizionata all'adozione di misure organizzative tale da evitare assembramenti e persone, tenendo conto delle dimensioni e delle caratteristiche dei luoghi e tali da garantire ai frequentatori la possibilità di rispettare la distanza tra loro di almeno un metro di cui all'allegato I, lettera d). Sono sospese le cerimonie civili e religiose, ivi comprese quelle funebri...

The opening of places of worship is conditional on the adoption of organizational measures such as to avoid gatherings and people, taking into account the size and characteristics of the places and such as to guarantee to the visitors the possibility of respecting the distance between them of at least one meter referred to in Annex I d). Civil and religious ceremonies are suspended, including funeral ceremonies.

The Italian (RC) Episcopal Conference has today announced it accepts this decree "mediated solely by the desire to do its part, also in this situation, to contribute to the protection of public health".

In light of this, as bishops we write to ask your own compliance and that of your communities, with this government ordinance, in union with our ecumenical partners. This means that there must be no services of public worship held until Friday 3 April, or until further notice which will depend on updated government advice and ecumenical implementation of that advice. Our Churches can remain open for private prayer, providing that the proper 1 metre distance is respected among the faithful and visitors.

This is an unprecedented situation. It will undoubtedly cause apprehension in some persons, so it is vital to indicate that these measures are simply in line with our calling to serve the common good.

At this time, we convey to you our own closeness in prayer and support. This season of Lent is certainly becoming a true desert experience. We know that you will use every effort to continue to support your people and keep them connected to the Church's life of prayer, meditation on God's word, and spiritual communion with our Lord.

If you have any questions about these measures, please contact, as appropriate, either Bishop David's office (david.hamid@churchofengland.org) or Bishop Mark's office (bishop@tec-europe.org).

With our prayers and fraternal love,

+ David Hamid

Copies to: The Diocesan Bishop
The Diocesan Secretary
The Archdeacon of Italy and Malta
The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church