

Ballyrashane Presbyterian Church

Message regarding COVID-19 Coronavirus

We're aware of the concern being expressed about the recent outbreak of COVID-19 Coronavirus. Therefore we need to be responsible in how we respond to this virus, particularly in relation to how we gather as a church family.

The recommendations for protecting ourselves and others are the same as we would do for colds and flus:

- Good hand hygiene is the most effective protection.
- Catch your cough or sneeze in a tissue, bin it and wash your hands.
- Members of the congregation and our organisations should stay at home if they feel ill and display flu-like symptoms and should not come to church services and activities until they feel well again. The symptoms to be aware of in the case of the Coronavirus include cough, shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing, and fever.
- Specifically, any members who may be advised to self-isolate should not come to Church Services or other meetings or activities, until they have been advised otherwise by their medical practitioner.

Measures which will be taken:

- We will ensure that good stocks of soap and paper towels are available in toilets and kitchens. Posters produced by the Public Health Agency are on display around the premises.
- We will be mindful of regularly disinfecting hard surfaces and especially often touched areas (e.g. door handles, backs of pews).
- Those who handle food are, as ever, to follow proper safe food handling precautions.
- As a temporary measure we are suspending shaking hands on our greeting and departure at church services. Again, this is to help prevent the potential spread of the virus.
- As a further temporary measure, we are suspending the passing around of offering plates during our services. There will be opportunity to place your offering in the plates while leaving the services.
- Our duty of care also extends to members with pastoral needs. Pastoral visitations by Phil or your elder will only be carried out on the bases of an emergency.
- We trust that we will not reach the stage where community gatherings, including church services and activities, need to be cancelled. We will continue to monitor the situation and will respond as advised by the Public Health Agency.

In the exceptional case of a Sunday service having to be cancelled, we will make use of online streaming. Finally, we encourage our congregation to love others well through this outbreak, to use our health to serve and not to hide (without being reckless), being particularly mindful of the most vulnerable. We hold in prayer those most directly affected by the outbreak, as well as medical professionals and other public servants as they work towards containing and finding a vaccine for this virus.