

*"At difficult times we have a choice. We can focus on fear, on ourselves and what we cannot do. Or we can turn to God and let God lead us into praying for the world – and let prayer flow into us taking creative and loving action."*

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Easter Sunday 2020

# Building Hope Together

*Anglican Communion Responses  
to the COVID-19 Pandemic*



**ANGLICAN ALLIANCE**  
Development · Relief · Advocacy

November 2020



# God's Church for God's World

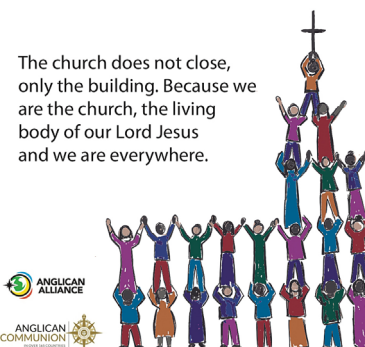
On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic. The pandemic is having catastrophic consequences across the world. Everywhere, the virus, and the measures to contain its spread, are impacting not only people's physical health but also their livelihoods, food security, education, relationships and mental health. Economies, health systems, education systems and other structures of society are under severe strain. No one is immune to the pandemic, but people who were already impoverished, vulnerable or marginalised are being affected most severely. At this time existing inequalities have been exposed and exacerbated.

Churches in every part of the Anglican Communion have been affected in some way, with church buildings shut, gatherings restricted, leaders facing deep challenges, church and clergy incomes impacted. And yet, throughout the Communion, churches have responded to the COVID-19 crisis with courage and compassion. They continue in prayer, constantly adapting patterns of worship to changing circumstances. They remain a committed, loving and active presence in their communities, even in lockdown: praying, comforting, informing, connecting, feeding the hungry and affirming gospel hope. Christians are coming together as the Body of Christ, responding as God's Church for God's World.

## How are churches across the Communion responding to COVID-19?

The Anglican Alliance is privileged and humbled to hear daily accounts from across the Communion of how churches are responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in compassionate and creative ways, including by:

- Adapting patterns of worship, often using online, radio and TV platforms, while working responsibly to open churches safely when the situation allows. Making funerals and other pastoral services meaningful despite constraints.



The church does not close, only the building. Because we are the church, the living body of our Lord Jesus and we are everywhere.

- Coordinating with national Ministries of Health to promote correct information and dispel misinformation, including about vaccines.
- Continuing pastoral care and promoting mental well-being for church members and people in the wider community, following safe practices.
- Identifying those most in need within communities, ensuring access to food along with support and care.
- Adapting processes for care and counselling for the dying and bereaved, working on phones and in coordination with health workers.
- Building on local church and community assets to create greater community resilience.
- Speaking prophetically to hold governments and societies to account at this time of crisis, including on equitable global access to vaccines.
- Sharing resources: appeals have been raised by the Anglican Communion Fund and mission and development agencies across the Communion to assist the most vulnerable.
- Above all, reflecting Christ's light in the world, the foundation of hope.



Church in Ghana promoting hand-washing through a tippy-tap

# Faith in the Time of COVID-19

## Prayer

**Keep us, loving God,  
in your merciful love and protection.  
Calm our fears in this time of great distress  
and help us to heed your call not to be afraid,  
that we may truly know your presence and your promise  
that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

From "Faith in the Time of COVID-19",  
a Bible study resource from the Anglican Alliance

Photo by Geoffrey Baumbach on Unsplash

**COVID-19 is now affecting every part of the world, disrupting people's lives and creating fear, anxiety, sorrow and hardship. Where can we find strength and hope at this troubling time? How might God be calling us to respond to the impacts of the pandemic?**

To help Christians reflect on their faith and scriptures in the midst of the pandemic, the Anglican Alliance has worked with a small group of biblical scholars, theologians and church leaders from around the Communion to produce a series of Bible studies called "[Faith in the Time of COVID-19](#)". These are also available in [Arabic](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#). One of the Bible studies is reproduced below.

*"In such extraordinary times, it is not only helpful but vital that we engage together with God's Word... We are filled anew with authentic hope. We can live the present and look to the future knowing the sovereignty of God and His reconciling love",* Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby in his foreword to the Bible studies.

### **Hope Rooted in God - example Bible Study from Faith in the Time of COVID-19**

*"Do not be afraid, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)*

*"But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who*

*formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." (Isaiah 43:1-2).*

### **The gift of hope**

Through prayer, we open ourselves to God's power at work within us. Through prayer, God changes us and shapes us to be the people God wants us to be. Through prayer, we invite God's action in and around us for healing, renewal and hope. Through prayer, we grow in trust and confidence in God. This passage speaks to God's people held in exile in Babylon during their captivity. All their fears have come true. Yet, into their situation, God speaks a message of love and assurance and gives to the people a promise of redemption and return, bringing the gift of hope.

Stories from Scripture and in our own histories remind us that, over the centuries, people have faced many crises, including disasters and pandemics. We hear stories of disease

epidemics in the Bible. In our own times, millions have suffered from malaria, from HIV/AIDS and many other diseases. In Isaiah 41:10 God tells us not to be afraid for God will strengthen us. The promise which God makes to his people in Isaiah 43:1-2 is that God is always with us when we pass through these crises. It is a promise that we will not be overcome, that we will be able to live as God's people in dignity, compassion and truth.

### **Questions for discussion**

1. What gives each of us hope in this passage?
2. Our world has experienced pandemics, hunger and other devastating crises before. How have we known God's faithfulness during difficult times in our lives, both personally and as peoples?
3. In Christ Jesus we have God who is with us in our time of distress, bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows as he suffered on the cross. And in his resurrection, Jesus brings us hope in new life. What do you think the loving presence of God might mean in the time of a pandemic such as now?
4. What is the good news, the hope of the gospel at this time? How can we respond?

# COVID-19 Responses Around the Communion

**During the pandemic, one of the Anglican Alliance's roles has been to identify and share how churches are putting their faith into action amidst the trauma of COVID-19: stories of hope and encouragement; models of good practice making a positive difference. These actions build on the gifts and assets of churches: their sustained community presence and relationships, trusted leadership, networks of volunteers and professionals, skills in counselling and community mobilisation, knowledge of their local areas to identify the most vulnerable, church buildings and health facilities, and so on. Despite their buildings in many places being closed, churches are finding innovative ways of continuing to serve the most vulnerable in their communities. Here are some examples:**



## **Feeding the hungry**

In many countries, lockdown measures have had a dire impact on the poorest, who rely on daily work to gain an evening meal for their families. In South Africa, the Anglican Church has worked with the government in the poorest communities to identify those most in need and deliver food aid. In Brazil, the Diocese of the Amazon has supported Indigenous communities, made especially vulnerable by COVID-19. In Jordan, local churches have connected with shop keepers to obtain food parcels for Iraqi refugees. In East Malaysia, churches have supported feeding programmes for migrant communities with no access to government provision.

In the USA, the Episcopal Church has adapted and sustained its programmes to support and feed the homeless. Churches in India, Uganda, the Middle East and many other places launched a range of initiatives to support vulnerable people with feeding programmes. In many countries, church buildings are being used as food sorting and distribution centres.

## **Promoting dignity in need**

Provinces throughout the Communion have long promoted asset-based approaches to church and community transformation. It has been evident that those churches which follow these approaches have been able to adapt and support their communities with more resilience in the face of the pandemic. In the Philippines, the Episcopal Church has connected with garment workers, currently out of work because of the pandemic, to commission them to sew Personal Protective Equipment for health workers – working from their homes and building on their existing skills. The Church has also developed a voucher system – called Dignity in Need – whereby the poorest receive money in exchange for a commitment to repay this grant through work on the church's social and building projects once the pandemic is over.

## **Trusted communicators**

Church and other faith leaders are, in many countries, the most trusted source of information and are vital to support public health initiatives. In this pandemic, church leaders have moved online for worship services and COVID-19 messaging, adapting also to TV, radio and text messaging. Innovative forms of communication have been developed, such as in Kenya where a bishop tours his parishes communicating via a loudspeaker on his car roof. In Papua New Guinea, church youth visit local communities to share information. Church leaders have also played a prophetic role, speaking truth to power in holding governments to account at this time of crisis. In Pakistan, the Church has successfully advocated for sanitation workers' rights to protection.

## **Welcoming the stranger**

Churches everywhere have been concerned about the impact of the pandemic on the most marginalised, which in many places includes migrant workers. The pandemic has shone a light onto the difficult and crowded conditions in which migrants live, putting them at increased risk of infection. In some countries, these migrant workers have lost their jobs and have been abandoned penniless in a foreign land. In some places, churches are worried that migrants are being stigmatised and blamed for spreading the virus. In many parts of the Communion, churches have been supporting affected migrant workers and advocating for dignified treatment. The Diocese of Singapore has launched various initiatives to provide support





A feeding programme run by the Church of North India.

for migrant workers and promote appreciation of their role. This includes an innovative media project, called 'My Dorm Our Home,' to help build migrant workers' resilience. The entertaining and educational content has been produced in three languages in partnership with the Church of Bangladesh and others.

#### Supporting those who are sick and in quarantine

In Bangladesh, one of the church hospitals has been designated a COVID-19 treatment centre by the government. In Myanmar, under the leadership of the Archbishop, about 30 youth volunteers from the Anglican Church are serving alongside others, Christian and non-Christian. This volunteer team assists people staying in government quarantine centres in Yangon. This year is the 60th Anniversary of Anglican Young People Association in Myanmar and the theme is "Be a blessing to others".

#### Pastoral care for the dying and bereaved

With restrictions on visiting in many places, churches have found alternative ways to continue their pastoral ministry with the sick and the bereaved, adapting to phone and online

connection if needed. In the Church of England, one diocese has pioneered a phone based pastoral care system in collaboration with the National Health Service, so that bereaved families can be passed on by health workers for pastoral counselling by the Church, other faith leaders or by secular counsellors.

#### Caring for mental well-being

Churches in various regions have responded to mental health concerns exacerbated by the pandemic. For example, in East Africa, a webinar was held to raise awareness on the issues.

In Latin America, an Anglican Commission for Mental Health was formed in April 2020 to discuss what measures can be taken to protect the mental well-being of church members, both clergy and laity. The Commission is engaging throughout the region, gathering professionals and people in pastoral ministries to equip churches to deal with mental health-related issues.

These are just a few examples of the hundreds of creative, positive responses as the churches mobilise to help the most vulnerable around the world.



Out-of-work garment workers in the Philippines now making PPE for health workers, facilitated by the Church.

# Role of the Anglican Alliance in Supporting the Communion

**The Anglican Alliance response to COVID-19 builds on the three essential actions of its mandate - to connect, equip and inspire the worldwide Anglican family of churches and agencies as they each respond in their own context to this pandemic, with its related social and economic impacts. This holistic mission seeks to bring hope and support in the midst of the crisis, especially for the most vulnerable.**

Since the inception of the Anglican Alliance in 2011, we have been building a networking platform across the Communion for mutual prayer and support and to share learning. In addition to three staff in the secretariat, the Alliance has a global senior adviser and six regional facilitators, who have developed extensive connections within their regions. We have a global board of trustees. We work closely with the Communion's mission and development agencies. We also collaborate with other teams within the Anglican Communion Office and at Lambeth Palace, while connecting with ecumenical bodies and other external agencies, including the UN.

The Anglican Alliance geared up its COVID-19 response in February 2020, when it became clear that COVID-19 was going to have an impact across the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Alliance has responded by mobilising its existing networks and assets to build capacity and share learning across the Communion, at regional and global levels.

## **Resourcing provinces & dioceses in responding to COVID-19**

- **Convening an on-going Global COVID-19 Task Force** to guide the Alliance's response, identifying emerging issues around the Communion and updating a strategic framework to guide the work.

- **Regular regional and global consultations to share learning.**

We have so far held over 20 regional and global consultations since March 2020 to build and exchange learning on church responses to COVID.

- **Thematic consultations on key issues – e.g. COVID-19 & migration, domestic abuse, etc.**

We have so far held over 10 such consultations either regionally or globally.

- **Communication: sharing stories of hope.** Our website hits have gone up from 10,000 per month to nearly 70,000 in June 2020. Please visit our website for news and resources: [AnglicanAlliance.org](https://AnglicanAlliance.org)

- **Building an online resource hub in four languages to provide technical, spiritual & pastoral resources.** This is our major and ongoing contribution and is proving highly valued. The [resource hub](#) has two parts: the facts of COVID-19 and practical information on how churches can respond. Please visit our COVID-19 Resource Hubs on our website to see the full range of materials. This includes the Bible studies: [Faith in the time of Coronavirus](#). We are adding new resources constantly.

- **Online courses.** We are now developing online training modules to address priority issues,

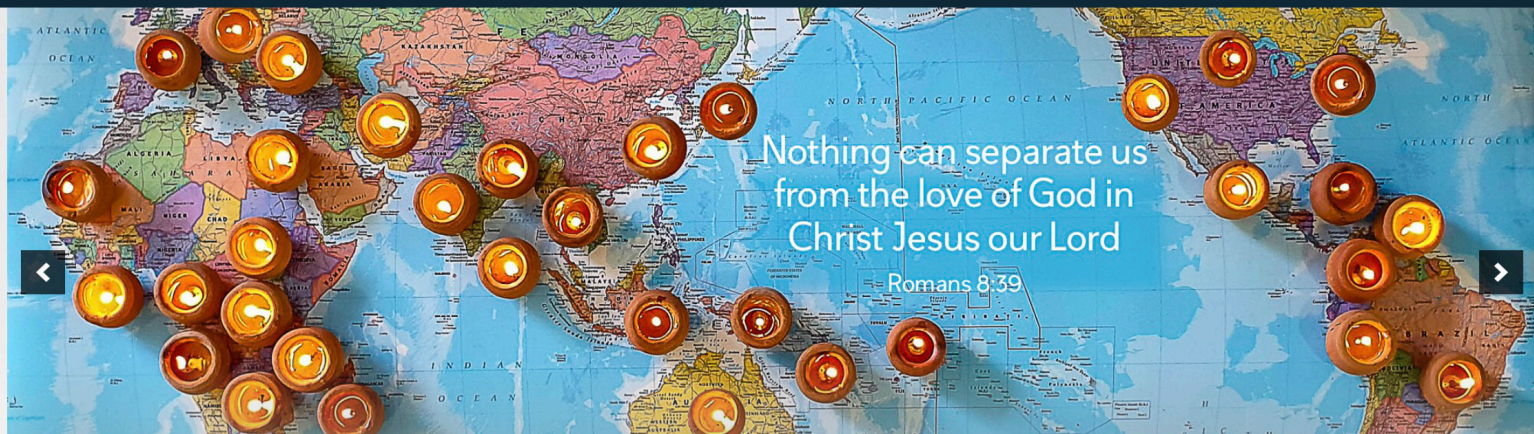
including a course on church and community resilience, launched in October 2020 with participants from 45 countries, delivered in multiple languages.

- **Mapping appeals from provinces and potential partners.** This on-going work charts the appeals from different dioceses and provinces around the Communion, mapping this against the various support grants.
- **Launching a reflective & theological conversation on 'Re-imagining our World',** involving churches, networks, agencies and others across the Communion.

## **Outcomes. Through all of these activities the Anglican Alliance aims to:**

- Build stronger connections across the Communion, regionally and globally
- Enable stronger responses to the pandemic by churches in their specific context
- Develop greater resilience across the Communion, building on experience from this and previous crises
- Share technical knowledge effectively, promoting the latest scientific facts and effective responses
- Make Biblical and theological reflection and pastoral support available, accessible and contextual
- Ensure that resources are channelled to those most in need, as the most vulnerable are rendered more so.





## Responding to COVID-19: resources from across the Communion

# Anglican Alliance COVID-19 Resource Hub

In March, the Anglican Alliance launched an online COVID-19 resource hub for the Communion. The hub is a living resource, which is regularly being updated as the situation evolves. The hub is available in [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#) and [French](#) as well as English.

The hub has two sections: [knowing the facts](#) and [how the Church can respond](#).

The “[knowing the facts](#)” section covers:

- Key facts from the World Health Organization
- Countering misinformation
- Guidance for churches, including guidance on [reopening churches as safely as possible](#).
- Guidance for schools
- What is COVID-19 / Coronavirus?
- What is a virus?

The “[how the Church can respond](#)” section covers:

### SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

- [Bible studies](#)
- [Prayer and reflection](#)
- [Maintaining worshipping life when we can't gather in person](#)

### PRACTICAL ACTION:

- [Supporting community preparedness for COVID-19](#)
- [Supporting impoverished, vulnerable and marginalised groups](#) – including refugees and migrants; victims and survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery; people living with HIV/AIDS
- [Examples of how churches across the Anglican Communion are supporting impoverished, vulnerable and marginalised people in their communities](#)
- [Supporting people in lockdown](#), including supporting children at home; caring for people with COVID-19; maintaining good mental health; tackling domestic abuse
- [Church and community engagement](#), including tackling stigma and discrimination
- [Supporting people through dying and bereavement](#), including talking about death and dying; handling the deceased with dignity and respect, safe funerals and alternative goodbyes; bereavement and grief
- [Other resource hubs on faith-based responses to COVID-19](#)

***“It is a key mission of our church to respond to people in need, witnessing to the love of God.”***

Archbishop Albert Chama, Primate of the Province of Central Africa & Chair of the Anglican Alliance Board





Nothing can separate us  
from the love of God  
in Christ Jesus our Lord  
**Romans 8:39**

*“One of the most exciting things about the Anglican Communion is the extraordinary network of local churches in every part of the world. When they come together as God’s people, somehow the Holy Spirit liberates ideas, initiatives and capacity that did not exist before. The Anglican Alliance is exciting because it turns those local experiences, knowledge and expertise into skills that can be shared and learned from across the whole Communion.”*

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby

Photo by Jason Krieger on Unsplash

# Re-Imagining our World

## A global conversation

Early in the pandemic, Canon Grace Kaiso, Anglican Alliance Senior Adviser, identified that this global event was a critical global moment, akin to world wars and other crises, when humanity has an opportunity to review the state of the world and choose to build back better - or, in worse scenarios, to fail to seize the moment and choose to build back the same - with the same inequalities, injustices and threats - or worse. For the churches, this time is an opportunity to listen to God’s voice: what is God telling us about the nature of his Kingdom and how the world could be different? How is God calling us to respond?

Canon Grace has written a theological reflection on the case for ‘Re-imagining our World’. This has since been shared with a global group of theologians and others, to build up a global conversation with their reflections in response.

The Anglican Alliance has developed a series of questions which frame this process of re-imagination:

1. What has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in our context, especially on the most vulnerable and marginalised? Any positive impacts?
2. What have we learnt at this time about the way the world works?
3. What is God showing us about the Kingdom during this time and how the world could be transformed?

4. How is God calling us, as individuals and as the Church, to respond? What are the gifts and opportunities God has given us?

In addition to the process with the group of theologians, the Anglican Alliance is now starting to take this framework of questions to other contexts in the Communion. We are reaching out to the Alliance’s regional fora, the Communion Networks, companion links’ youth-to-youth groups and others, with the invitation to join the conversation of Bible reflection and questions. The Alliance will track these conversations where possible to distil the reflections around the world. We will offer this as a contribution to the Communion’s reflections on what it means to grow fully into God’s Church for God’s World.



Receiving treatment at the Diocese of Jerusalem’s Princess Basma Centre.