Introduction:

Coronavirus is a type of virus. As a group, coronaviruses are common worldwide. The New Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new type of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China. It starts with flu-like symptoms including fever, cough, or shortness of breath. The current evidence is that most cases appear to be mild. However, symptoms can develop into severe pneumonia. In general, the New Coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions such as diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

Members of the public can help protect themselves and others by carrying tissues at all times, and using them to catch coughs and sneezes. They should throw the tissue in the bin, and to kill the germs, wash their hands with soap and water, or use a disinfectant fluid. This is the best way to slow the spread of most germs, including the New Coronavirus.

As a Church we are keen to ensure that all our members, officers, ministers and employees follow the latest advice provided by Public Health Wales. You can view their latest advice on self-isolation by visiting their website – https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/ Telephone enquiries can still be made through NHS Direct at present. (0845 4647)
At the same time, we are keen to provide specific guidance within our particular context, trusting that together we will respond responsibly, timely and above all in a way that demonstrates concern and care for others.

Following a further meeting, we believe that we need to be more proactive in the advice that we provide. While keen to ensure that we do not raise people's fears, yet, we believe in the need to show our care and concern in a way that demonstrates a willingness to do what we can to protect others. We also believe that we should now emphasize the seriousness of this situation, both to our own health, and particularly the health of others.

**Guidance for Churches:**

- We advise that public worship should cease in our buildings at this time. We do not feel able to suggest when this advice will change, however, we will continually update our website with any new advice.

- In the case of funerals, all funerals held in our buildings will be strictly private for close family, and no refreshments will be provided. You should ensure that the building is cleaned both before and after the service, and that there is an opportunity for individuals to wash their hands in the chapel. You should provide paper towels and/or hand sanitizer.

- In the case of weddings, if they are conducted in our buildings, they should be limited to the bride and groom and sufficient witnesses. Again, you should ensure that the building is cleaned both before and after the service, and that there is an opportunity for individuals to wash their hands in the chapel. You should provide paper towels and/or hand sanitizer.

- As we are advising that all public worship should cease for the time being, this means that any baptismal services will also be postponed.

- As is the case now, Ministers and Leaders should be proactive in talking pastorally with individuals and families affected by these steps, and offering memorial services and public celebrations of weddings should be a priority when the situation changes with respect to public gatherings.

- We now advise that churches should not include specific youth and children’s ministry as part of your ministry during this time.
If you are organising house groups, special attention should be paid to hygiene when inviting others to attend, or when preparing any drinks / refreshments for attendees.

Guidance for Ministers / Employees:

We are well aware of our responsibility to be a caring presence in situations where people may be suffering physically, experiencing concern or anxiety, caring for a family member / friend, or having to temporarily restrict their own movements. In such a context our ministers / workers will need to consider an appropriate response in every context. Having said this, we believe that we should provide some guidance.

Leaders and members will need a shared understanding of pastoral care during this period. While keen to ensure that care is offered, ministers should exercise sensitivity in asking themselves whether a visit to a home or care home / nursing home / hospital is always appropriate. As a large number of our members belong to those groups that are considered as especially vulnerable, we should act in a way that recognises this.

As with churches above, we emphasise the need for personal hygiene and at the same time the need to respect the concern or worry of individuals in relation to shaking hands, hugging, ensuring appropriate distance etc.

We are keen to ensure that we do not neglect to visit where it is absolutely necessary, however visiting will not be the norm during this period. However, we do emphasise the need to keep in regular contact with members and others.

We have issued our ministers and employees guidance in relation to sickness absence arrangements, dependent family care arrangements and any further human resources advice on Wednesday 11th March. Ministers and workers should also take note of the letter sent to them on the 13th of March.

All our workers will work from home during this period, and will avoid unnecessary travel. Appropriate arrangements will be made at the Assembly Office, Coleg y Bala and Coleg Trefeca to ensure that a rota exists for one member of staff to deal with telephone enquiries and post etc.
Guidance for Officers / Courts / Departments and Groups:

- We invite our Courts, (Association and Presbyteries) not to hold their meetings during this time. This period currently extends to the end of May. This guidance is also pertinent to the meetings of the various committees of these Courts. As there are a number of Presbyteries about to meet, as well as the Association we will liaise directly with officers of these courts and discuss how we will safeguard any decisions that have to be taken using our 'Emergency Committee' procedure. As you can understand we will need to keep a close eye on any developments coming from Public Health Wales and we encourage you to seek the latest information by visiting our website (https://www.ebcpcw.cymru/en/news/) or our social media accounts: Twitter: https://twitter.com/EBC_PCW Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/EBCPCW/

- Having said this, we urge those organising meetings to ensure that where possible people can 'attend' any meeting via Skype, Facetime, Messenger video etc.

- All Sub-Committee, Committee or Department meetings will be adjourned at present. Officers of these committees / Departments will need to take any decisions under an 'emergency decisions' procedure. However, in the case of the Ministries Department, the Resources Department, the Trustees and the Assembly Board, we will be considering over the next week how arrangements that allow discussion and decision making in their case can be safeguarded on a broader level.

- We anticipate that many of our discussions will take place via Skype or Telephone Conference. The administrative staff of the Assembly Office will be available to arrange and facilitate this at the request of Officers of each Court, Department or Committee.

- In the coming months, we will revoke any arrangements made for PCW representatives to visit churches / events / conferences abroad and outside Wales.
• We will try to find a way of ensuring that our chief officers are able to continue to attend meetings within Wales, in the hope that this will happen increasingly over Skype etc over the coming months.

Guidance for Centres:

• We have decided to immediately close our Centres at Bala and Trefeca until the end of May, and we will review this subject to the latest developments.