

To: All Incumbents and Wardens, Clergy and Lay Ministers of Word and Sacrament:

## **Effective Immediately**

### **Corona Virus or COVID 19 Guidelines for Responding in the Territory of the People**

Dear Friends:

This is an announcement to all congregations as we begin to deal with the fears, anxiety and our common life together around the coronavirus. This is in response to the many requests for us to review our practices and give some clear directives around our Eucharistic life together as a community. This will likely be a first statement with others to follow as we deal with a quickly changing public health concern around the coronavirus also known as COVID 19.

The outbreak of the human coronavirus is of concern to all of us. My inbox has been overflowing with questions about how we as a faith community will deal with the growing concern as the virus reaches the Central Interior. So how do we nurture our sense of oneness with God and with each other in the face of worry about either catching or transmitting the coronavirus to others? What are the best practices around the celebration of the Eucharist to minimize risk to others? This morning I met with the British Columbia and Yukon House of Bishops and together discussed ways in which we can help our churches and church gatherings be aware of some of the risks, and suggest preventative practices.

Here are some best practices to help prevent the transmission of disease in the parish:

- Encourage and remind parishioners who may feel ill, even mildly, to not attend worship or church gatherings. It is important not to interact with those who may have compromised immune systems, like young children, the elderly and others.
- It is important we all refrain from touching others in all situations, especially young children and those who are most vulnerable,
- Have hand sanitizer placed in strategic areas throughout the church (worship space and gathering areas).

**Eucharistic practices** to help minimize the spread of the coronavirus and other bacterial or viral infection:

- **Presiders, communion administrators and other liturgical ministers** should follow proper hand washing and hand sanitizing techniques. Wash your hands with warm, soapy water prior to worship and, as an extra precaution, use hand sanitizer before the preparation of the table and then avoid touching their nose, mouths or eyes.
- **Use only metal chalices and only fortified wine**, as these two combined have antiseptic properties. Those parishes who use pottery chalices should be in touch with the Bishop's office as we have some extra metal chalices available. Parishes who use only grape juice should be encouraged to offer communion in one kind only for health and safety reasons.

- **The practice of us communicating each other should be discouraged immediately.**
- **Presider should be the only one distributing the bread.**
- **Anyone who administers the chalice must follow these steps:** Clean purificators are to be used for each service. It may be necessary to have additional purificators available during the course of communion. The chalice is to be wiped with real friction on both the inside and outside of the rim of the chalice between each communicant, and then turned so the next communicant receives from a fresh location. Chalices and patens are to be cleaned properly with hot water (preferably scalding water) and soap. Purificators should be used only once and cleaned in hot water.
- **Intinction should not be allowed (under any circumstances) in that the potential of fingers making contact with the wine poses a significant risk in the spreading of a virus or other infection from one person to another.** While some in our parishes are in the habit of intincting (holding a wafer in one's hand and dipping it into the chalice), the practice runs the risk of transferring germs from one person to another through the wine. Also, in parishes that provide a gluten-free bread alternative to wafers, intinction can contaminate the wine and cause potential health risks to gluten-intolerant communicants. Parishes will need to be educated about this, explaining the importance and the lower risk of drinking from the common cup OR explaining that, should a person not want to receive the cup, they are encouraged to receive the bread alone (which the Church understands as being a full participation in the gift Christ offers us in the Eucharist).
- **Exchanging the Peace can be done in a variety of ways:** When we exchange the peace, we should always respect the needs and attitudes of others. Bowing or nodding to another person is an appropriate expression of our commitment to communal life. All physical contact should be discontinued during the Peace. No hand shaking or hugging, please.
- **Passing the offering plate from one person to another should be discouraged,** allowing only the side persons to pass the offering plate or in some congregations it might be more practical to have the offering plate set in one strategic spot and collect the offering as people come into worship.
- **Removal of water from baptismal fonts** is encouraged now to discourage the dipping of hands in the water and spread of viral infections.

### **Coffee Hour:**

Best practices for communion life at our gatherings especially when coffee and food are served: Coffee Hours, refreshments, lunches...

- Follow good hygiene, it is important for food handlers and preparers to thoroughly wash their hands prior to touching any food or beverage containers. If you do touch your hands to your face, it is important for the individual to sanitize their hands again. All beverage and food containers should be thoroughly washed before and after use, and sanitized, as well as all surfaces where food and beverages are served.

**Home visits, hospital and care home visits and home communion** are another area of our communion life of concern for us, as we care for those who we visit regularly.

- All those who are visiting the vulnerable, especially those with respiratory disease or medical conditions, should not be visited at this time. Phone calls and notes will continue to communicate our care for them.
- Hospital and care home visits will have directives posted for those visiting, please honour their warnings. Again, phone calls and notes will continue to communicate our care for them.
- Home Communion should be done with great caution. Only bread enough for individuals in attendance should be taken in a clean container. No wine or communion kits should be taken to reserve sacrament services. Thorough washing of hands is imperative and the use of hand sanitizers. Each visit should have its own sacrament prepared for it and at no time should we be taking communion from one home to another. No reserved sacrament should be returned to the church but should be consumed immediately before leaving an individual home.

There is much more to be said around the care of our church communities, the communities we serve and the care of individuals. However, this is a lengthy message already. Making yourself aware of good practices and following the directives of the Health Authorities will go a long way in keeping us all safe and healthy.

I also know that within our communities we have many traditions, denominational standards and practices, and I would draw your attention by the links below, to others who have sound advice for us.

I would also call us all to a time of prayer for those in our communities who are vulnerable and fearful of this fast-moving virus spreading around our world. Pray also, and do what you can, to help stop the spread of racism that has become as fast spreading as the virus itself.

I am asking all those in leadership to help me communicate this directive immediately within our parish churches and find the best practices within your context.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me [bishop@territory.anglican.ca](mailto:bishop@territory.anglican.ca)

Blessings

+Barbara

Links: [Diocese of New Westminster Statement](#)

[United Church of Canada Statement](#)

[Lutheran Church Bishops Statement](#)

[Statement from the Primate](#)

Information about the coronavirus from the Government of Canada Website [here](#)

Anglican Church of Canada on Eucharistic Practice and the Risk of Infection [here](#)