



Episcopal Office, Diocese of Ottawa  
Anglican Church of Canada

Bureau épiscopal, Diocèse d'Ottawa  
L'Eglise anglicane du Canada

The Right Reverend John H. Chapman  
Bishop of Ottawa

Son Excellence Monseigneur John H. Chapman  
Évêque d'Ottawa

*With God's grace, the mission of our ministries  
is to enable people to know Jesus Christ,  
to live and share the good news,  
to grow in faith, and to serve God's world.*

March 12, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace be with you in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour as we journey through this holy season of Lent.

We continue to monitor closely the information about the COVID 19 virus and particularly its effect on the health of the people in our communities.

The Public Health Agency of Canada continues to assess the current risk associated with this virus as low for our area. However, we want to be diligent in our practices out of concern for the well-being of the most vulnerable among us.

Therefore, I have made the decision to temporarily suspend the sharing of the common cup at celebrations of the Eucharist, effective immediately. The presiding priest is to consecrate both the bread and the wine, consume in both kinds, but to administer only the bread to the congregation. Rest assured that doing so is considered fully participating in the presence of Christ.

In addition to advice and hygiene information included in previous statements, I am also mandating a contact-free exchange of the peace, effective immediately. A verbal exchange of the peace is the most responsible solution at this point.

As well, person-to-person passing of offering plates is also prohibited until further notice. Only sidespersons are to handle and pass collection plates. If that is not practical, the plates are to be put in obvious locations and parishioners directed to them.

Among other things, we are a community of bread and wine, touching in peace, and gracious hospitality, so these measures run against our normal instincts and wishes. We pray that they will be in effect for only a short period of time. Please continue to pray for all of those suffering from the virus, those caring for them, as well as those ailing in other ways. I remain,

Yours in the faith of Christ,

The Rt. Rev. John H. Chapman  
9<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Ottawa

JHC/hnp  
Encl.



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## Diocese of Ottawa

### **REVISED Guidelines for Responding to COVID 19<sup>1</sup>**

**March 12, 2020**

*These initial guidelines for Responding to COVID 19 are now revised in light of the reality of persons in Eastern Ontario and West Quebec succumbing to the virus. Please take note of this reality and implement these guidelines immediately until further notice.*

NOTE: Information about COVID 19 was obtained from the Government of Canada Website <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

The following are some ways to address our own and others' fears and remain faithful in our Eucharistic life together as a community.

#### **1. Educate ourselves and others about the nature of the virus.<sup>2</sup>**

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through the air (by coughing and sneezing), through close personal contact such as touching or shaking hands or by touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

There are currently no vaccines available to protect you against human coronavirus infection. You may be able to reduce your risk of infection or spreading infection to others by doing the following: staying home if you are sick, when coughing or sneezing: covering your mouth and nose with your arm to reduce the spread of germs, disposing of any tissues you have used as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards, washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.

#### **2. At this time of responding to COVID 19, engage in overall practices that can help prevent the transmission of this disease in a parish.**

Hand sanitizers, while not a complete means of avoiding viral or other kinds of infection, should be placed in strategic locations throughout the church. *Avoid hand contact with your face.* Encourage and remind parishioners who may feel ill, even mildly so, not to

<sup>1</sup> Drawn from "Responding to the Coronavirus: Expressing our Unity in Christ in Church Communities and in the Holy Eucharist" – Diocese of New Westminster (February 6, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> Information about COVID 19 was obtained from the Government of Canada website <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

attend worship. Remaining at home protects the most vulnerable: children, the elderly, those with compromised immune systems, and those who suffer chronic respiratory conditions.

### **3. Undertake specific worship practices that help to minimize the chance of spreading COVID 19 or any other bacterial or viral infection.**

#### **A. The Eucharist**

- a. **Priests** who feel ill, have a cough or fever, or any other issue that can be connected to a symptom related to COVID 19, should NOT attend church or celebrate the Eucharist. If no other priest is available to celebrate the Eucharist, then Morning Prayer should be celebrated. It is not only the priest's health that is critical, but the health of the congregation.
- b. **Presiders and other liturgical ministers, as well as servers, altar guild members, and sidespeople should follow proper hand washing and hand sanitizing techniques.** All those involved in the leadership of worship must wash their hands with warm, soapy water at the beginning of the liturgy and, as an extra precaution, use hand sanitizer before the preparation of the table. After sanitizing their hands, all those involved should avoid touching their nose, mouths, or eyes. After the liturgy all should wash their hands again with warm, soapy water.
- c. **The common cup:**<sup>3</sup>
  1. **The sharing of the common cup at this time is now suspended.**
  2. The Presiding Celebrant (only) is to consecrate both the bread and wine, and to consume in both kinds.
  3. Only the bread (the host) is to be distributed to everyone else.
  4. The Church's ancient teaching is that the whole Christ is received whether one receives consecrated bread or bread and wine.
  5. Chalices and patens are to be cleaned properly with hot water (preferably scalding water) and soap both before and after use.
  6. Purificators should be used only once and cleaned in hot water.

#### **B. The Exchange of the Peace**

**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. It is also appropriate to place one's own hands palm to palm as one bows to another person as a sign of peace. Shaking hands or hugging others is not allowed in a time when we are sensitive about person-to-person contact.

#### **C. Anointing**

**Anointing** of multiple people at corporate liturgies is suspended at this time. The anointing with oil of an individual on the face or head may continue in private settings only, where handwashing and sanitizing is possible before and after the anointing. It is recommended that a cotton ball be used to transfer the oil from the oil stock to the individual, and afterwards the cotton ball destroyed.

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<sup>3</sup> Diocese of Toronto – COVID 19 liturgical practices, and follow-up. (2 and 5 March 2020)

#### **D. Offering Plates**

The person-to-person passing of offering plates is to be avoided. Only sidespersons ought to handle and pass collection plates for others to give their offerings. If that is not practical, then plates or baskets can be put in obvious locations and parishioners directed to them.

#### **4. Name the fears and prejudices that may come up for us and for others and consciously turn away from those prejudices and fears.**

Given the information we have about where the COVID 19 originated, it would be easy to begin, consciously or unconsciously, focusing that fear on a specific racial or cultural group. At any given time in human history viruses have arisen in one part of the world and over time been transmitted to other regions. The ease of international travel in contemporary society has made such transmission even easier.

While it is vital that we take precautions to prevent the spread of biological viruses, it is equally vital that we take proactive steps to prevent the spread of another kind of “virus” — the virus of ethnic or national blame. As a Diocese we are committed to dismantling racism. The current outbreak of COVID 19 provides us with the responsibility to dismantle any prejudice or racism that can emerge during such a time.

#### **5. Coffee hours, refreshments.**

Following good hygiene, it is important that food handlers and preparers thoroughly wash their hands prior to touching any foods or beverage containers and avoid touching their hands to their faces. Should there be facial contact, it is important that the individual sanitize their hands again. All beverage and food containers should be thoroughly washed before and after use and then sanitized, as well as all surfaces where food and beverages are served.

#### **6. Visitation of the sick, home communions.**

The first consideration is the health of the individual ministering to those who are ill. If the person is in a vulnerable category (age, medical condition, etc.), or has a respiratory disease, then this individual should not visit those who are infirm or ill or in hospital.

**A. Hospital or institutional visitations.** Most hospitals or other institutions will have warnings posted about who can be visited, and under what conditions. These warnings must be honoured. If one is unable to visit an individual, leaving a card with a note is a way to communicate a concern and care.

**B. Communion.** The practice is to use Reserved Sacrament, and to distribute only the host or bread, not wine. When bringing the Sacrament to the ill, it is best to bring only enough wafers for the individual and those receiving communion, and to consume whatever is brought to the person at the site. Thorough handwashing is imperative. Do not bring vessels or communion kits to those who are ill for fear of contamination. If there are multiple communion visits, then the Reserved Sacrament should be kept off-site and only what is needed taken to the ill. Under no circumstances should Reserved Sacrament taken to the ill be returned to the Church for further storage.

*As stated previously, these guidelines will be updated again if COVID 19 becomes more of a reality in this diocese. Public health warnings will be honoured.*

**Staying Safe and Healthy**  
***A Brief Summary for the Diocese in the Time of COVID 19***

1. Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently. Use soap and water; also use hand sanitizers.
2. If you are ill, please do not attend church.
3. Hand to hand contact is discouraged, for greeting, for the exchange of the peace, and at other times. Please acknowledge the other person, bow towards them at the exchange of the peace, but do not make contact.
4. Communion in one kind is full communion.
5. Name and deal with your fears and prejudices about COVID 19 and people who are infected.



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### Checklist for Congregations Regarding COVID 19

#### March 12, 2020

*These steps are guidelines to assist congregations in approaching this topic and should not be construed as hard and fast rules for proceeding. Congregations should feel free to complete the checklist as best suits their needs.*

- ☐ Identify someone within the congregation as a Pandemic Coordinator.
- ☐ Identify the essential functions of the congregation, e.g. Liturgy, pastoral care, outreach, etc.
- ☐ Determine the potential impact of a pandemic on the congregation's usual activities and services.
  - Plan for situations likely to require increasing, decreasing, or altering the activities of the congregation.
  - If possible, have computer access to working documents available to those holding essential positions in off-site locations.
- ☐ Identify essential positions in relation to the essential functions, including paid and volunteer positions, needed to carry on the work of the congregation during a pandemic.
- ☐ Be in contact with local municipal health units to establish safe practices for sanitizing Sunday School rooms, food handling and safety, cleansing of nursery toys and children's toys, etc.
- ☐ Train all congregational staff and liturgical ministers in basic health procedures, such as proper hand washing techniques, cough etiquette, distribution of communion elements, etc.
- ☐ Evaluate the congregation's usual activities and identify those that may facilitate the virus spreading from person to person. Set up policies to modify these activities to prevent the spread of COVID 19.
- ☐ Develop back-up plans for essential functions.
- ☐ Cross-train people for essential positions so that if a person is ill, others are available to complete tasks.
- ☐ Determine the protocol for activating the congregation's response plan, i.e. telephone tree.
- ☐ Outline what the organizational structure would be during an emergency and revise periodically. Identify key contacts with multiple back-ups, roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ Develop and maintain contact listings for those individuals providing essential functions and their back-up, including back-up for clergy.
- ☐ Encourage use of pre-authorized giving as a means of mitigating the impact of reduced attendance on the congregation's income. Discuss ability to access a line of credit with the bank.
- ☐ Determine which and the quantity of supplies that will be required to promote good hygiene during a pandemic; have these supplies on hand, keeping in mind that the predicted length of the first wave of an influenza pandemic is three months. Establish a protocol for reviewing these supplies and replacing those which have outlasted their expiry dates.
- ☐ Stock Sunday School rooms with hand washing or hand sanitizer supplies, waste receptacles, tissues; stock nurseries with washable or disposable baby supplies.
- ☐ Ensure that all those using the congregation's facilities follow the congregation's protocol.
- ☐ Advise parishioners that the congregation will be following diocesan protocol by adhering to guidelines provided by local health units as well as their emergency management agencies.
- ☐ Be familiar with Diocesan Human Resource policies regarding clerical and lay staff during a pandemic.
- ☐ Develop strategies for allowing staff to work from their homes.
- ☐ In keeping with the plan, maintain contact with local health authorities.