



# *the* EPISCOPAL DIOCESE *of* UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Daily we receive more news of the spread of the COVID19 virus (Coronavirus). In the midst of an already difficult flu season, this news surely raises anxiety and concern. Our role as Christians, and particularly for those of us called to leadership in the church, is to help alleviate fear and anxiety with wisdom and understanding.

I want to commend a few basic practices to you, especially to clergy in charge of congregations and those who may lead congregations in worship:

- **The most important way to minimize the spread of infectious diseases is for people who have symptoms (fever, upset stomach, frequent coughing or sneezing, etc.), to stay home. This includes clergy.** Clergy or lay ministers can bring the sacraments to those who cannot attend a service, and can provide pastoral care by phone as appropriate.
- **Frequent handwashing is another important way to minimize spread.** Plenty of soap and paper towels should be provided in restrooms and kitchens of each congregation, and containers of hand sanitizer should be readily available in the pews, near doors, and beside tissue boxes to be used when handwashing is not possible.

Additionally, below are a few liturgical suggestions to help minimize the spread of infectious diseases:

Receiving the sacrament in one kind has ancient precedent in our spiritual life. The Church believes that those who receive only the bread (or wine) have fully received the sacrament. If there are concerns about use of the common cup, the bread may be distributed by Eucharistic ministers who have cleansed their hands.

Because hands are a common source of infection, Intinction by the communicant is not a sanitary substitute for drinking from the chalice. Peer reviewed studies and Centers for Disease Control guidance since the 1980s have consistently shown that “the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low, and appropriate safeguards--that is, wiping the interior and exterior rim between communicants, use of care to rotate the cloth during use, and use of a clean cloth for each service - would further diminish this risk.” *American Journal of Infection Control* (Vol. 26, No. 5, 1998).

During the Peace, you may want to invite worshipers to remain in their pews and greet one another with a bow, or smile, or other similar gesture, acknowledging each other while avoiding physical contact.

Following the service, the receiving line should include conversation but omit physical contact.

During Coffee Hour (or other time of fellowship), food may be served by individuals who have washed their hands, put on serving gloves, or are using tongs to minimize the touching of food. Either paper plates and napkins or a dishwasher with a water temperature setting hot enough to kill germs should be used for cleanup.

Our partners at Episcopal Relief & Development have put together important resources to help congregations prepare for, and respond to, a potential outbreak. You can view those and other resources on our diocesan website at <https://www.edusc.org/blog/covid/>.

For the latest information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), I invite you to visit their dedicated COVID-19 page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Please keep those who are ill with infectious diseases, their families and caregivers, and our medical care providers, in your prayers. The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina, and indeed the Church universal, has a strong history of caring for one another - and for our communities - in times of illness and health. My prayer is that we, with God's help, will continue this tradition together.

Faithfully yours,

The Rt. Rev. Andrew Waldo, Bishop  
The Episcopal Church in Upper South Carolina