

March 15 2020

Communion and the Lords Supper at St Peter's in light of Novel COVID 19.

As some of you may have heard, this Novel COVID 19 virus commonly known as the *Coronavirus* has been upgraded worldwide, to Pandemic Status. This means that there are some changes we at St Peter's need to make and some issues we need to be aware of.

First of all. Don't Panic! As this virus spreads like the flu, the most effective means of avoiding it are the same as for the flu; avoid if possible, wash hands often and thoroughly as well as isolate if symptomatic, seek medical attention, drink plenty of fluids and rest.

For Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.

The advise from the Archbishop is that no one except the priest or Bishop may dip or intinct the bread into the wine. As a result all intincting (except by the priest) at St Peters will cease. (*See accompanying notes*) During the greeting of peace, you are encouraged to stay where you are not move around. Smile, wave, bow, perhaps touch elbows or shod feet with your nearest neighbours and say 'peace be with you, shalom or God's peace' while looking them in the eye. Remember we are connected even when we cant touch. Remember the reason for this is to protect the most vulnerable in our community and refrain from shaking hands, hugging or kissing. This will include the clergy and the sanctuary party.

To avoid or minimise your risk, please:

- Wash your hands regularly; particularly after the bathroom or public exposure, touching surfaces and other people and definitely prior to touching your own face, eating, or physically interacting with others.
- Avoid touching your face (*the most common form of transmission is hand to face*).
- If unsure of your own health, self isolate or self quarantine and seek medical advice. Contact the parish to ask for prayer or assistance if you need it, even if lonely call one of us for a chat. The wardens and clergy and office staff, when available are happy to speak with you, leave a message and we will call you.
- If you are immuno-deficient, or immuno-compromised avoid public spaces, this would definitely include church
- Refrain from needlessly touching another person even close family members if concerned; this of course includes shaking hands and hugging (*hard I know*).
- Carry and use antibacterial wipes and/or hand sanitiser frequently and wash your hands when you can.
- Cough or sneeze into a bent elbow or tissue and dispose of quickly, then wash your hands
- Finally, the most effective response to possible virus pathogens, wash, wash, wash your hands.

What exactly does this mean for us during worship?

- Hand sanitiser is available in various location around St Peter's and you are encouraged to use it as often as you feel necessary
- Two sinks with hand soap are available in the outside toilets and the prep room.
- Prayer for healing is available but will be hands free.
- A touch free blessing can be sought as an alternative to communion.
- The greeting of peace is encouraged, but will avoid touching.
- There will be no hand shaking after the service
- We will not offer the common cup to anyone including the priest
- If the wine is offered it will be intincted (dipped) by the priest only.
- Anointing is still be available upon request BUT only AFTER the service and proper hand washing will follow.
- A bowl of water with antibacterial soap will be available for the priest to use as well as hand sanitiser for all parishioners.

Summarised from Archbishop Phillip Aspinall letter dated 9/3/2020.

The practice of Holy Communion is to be encouraged. Our theology states that A portion of bread placed in a hand belongs to the whole loaf, so the individual who receives that portion belongs to the whole body. Just as the sip of wine belongs to the one cup so the communicant belongs to the one Body of Christ through the cup. In a culture where individualism is dominant, the church proclaims its corporate nature: that we are not a loose collection of individuals all doing our own Christian thing, but one body-working together and responsible for one another-because we all share in the one bread and the one cup.

It ought to be noted here that the many individual wafers used in the vast majority of churches does tend to undermine this sense of sharing in the one bread. A move towards one loaf of suitable bread for communion might help clearly to show that “we who are many are one body for we all share in the one bread.”

The Wine. Using alcoholic wine, as well as silver or gold chalices and wiping the lip of the chalice with a clean cloth after each person cleans up to 98% of all germs and bacteria. it is noted here, that if the use of a common chalice did contribute to the spread of infection, mass infections among congregations, and especially among clergy, could be expected something which in fact does not occur.

Given that the risks of infection spreading via a common cup are at worst minimal, and that the tradition and practice of the Anglican Church in company with the vast majority of Christians through the ages has been to use a common cup, and that the practice of individual cups is not provided for in the Canons of the Diocese, the use of individual cups for communion will not occur. As recently as December 2009 permission for this practice was declined by the Archbishop.

Intincting or dipping of the bread in the wine is a much later construct and came about because of virus's such as SARS, Bird and Swine Flu's. Historically, intincting has not lessened the instance of infection. If anything it has the potential to increase the rate of transmission especially when fingers are routinely dipped into the wine. Fingers and fingernails carry many more pathogens and germs than lips and mouths. It is the advise of this Diocese that this practice of intincting is not only to be discouraged, but to cease all together. The exception to this is if the priest intincts for those they are communicating.

Summarised from an Adclerum to the clergy dated 9th March 2020.