

# The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh

## Guide to best practices during the COVID-19 outbreak

March 5, 2020

**Number One: Take Care of Yourself and Your Family.** We are commanded to “honor God in our bodies.” This presents us with a moral and spiritual obligation to do all we can to promote the health of ourselves and our loved ones, not for our own sake, but so that we do not become a source of illness to others. Observe and help others practice the basics of good hygiene at home and in the world, namely:

- ❖ Cover coughs or sneezes with the forearm or elbow (*not* your hands).
- ❖ Wash hands frequently: warm water, soap, 20 seconds minimum.
- ❖ Use hand cleanser frequently, especially after hand contact with others.
- ❖ If you or others in your household are sick, don't be brave. Stay home.

**Number Two: If You Are Healthy, Come to Church!** As The Body of Christ, we are called to community, and so we come together for prayer, Eucharist and fellowship. Nothing in the current state of the coronavirus outbreak should stop us from doing that. We need one another and should always hold one another in the love of Christ. Remember, *we have not received the spirit of fear to fall back into slavery, but we have received the spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15).*

### Number Three: While At Church...

At The Peace: Consider exchanges that do not involve handshakes or hugs, such as eye contact and smiles, a bow or a wave, even the now-popular elbow bump.

At Communion: The common cup shall remain in use in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

- ❖ Please refrain from the practice of intinction (dipping the bread into the wine). There is far greater risk of germs spreading when fingers come in contact with the wine, than when lips are placed on the cup.
- ❖ Clergy and lay Eucharistic ministers should use hand sanitizer before distributing, and follow proper techniques (wipe and turn) in administering the cup.
- ❖ *If you are uneasy receiving from the common cup for any reason, take only the Communion bread -- you are still sharing fully in the Presence of our Lord.*

**Number Four: Care for the Sick and for Those Who Care for Them.** This is what the Church has always done and we must continue. We are to love those whom Jesus loves, which is absolutely everyone.

- ❖ Pay attention to those within our congregations who may be at-risk, especially the elderly and those who are more susceptible to illness.
- ❖ Reach out to health professionals you know. They may be tired and their families may be afraid. Offer appropriate pastoral support.
- ❖ For those unable to get to church, consider innovative ways to get church to them, such as streaming your Sunday liturgy and sermon on Facebook Live.
- ❖ Beyond the walls of our churches, seek out those who might be vulnerable. Find partners in helping them stay healthy and ministering to them should they fall ill.