



Office of the Bishop

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To: Rector and Wardens
From: Bishop Sue
Date: November 2, 2009
Re: **H1N1 Influenza**

Last spring, following the outbreak of H1N1 influenza in Nova Scotia, Diocesan Council asked me to form a group to create an Emergency Preparedness Plan for the diocese.

The group was comprised of people who have expertise in this field. The group included Jack Gallagher, Patrick Hartling, Anne King, The Rev'd Gloria McClure-Fraser, Dave Myatt, The Rev'd Canon Gordon Redden, and The Rev'd Keirsten Wells; and was chaired by Canon Redden and Mr. Hartling.

Their report is enclosed. I commend it to your attention. Please work through the Parish Checklist and ensure that members of your congregations are aware of steps being taken to help them protect their own health. Identify your parish contact person and send their name on to your Regional Dean.

In relation to gathering for worship and sharing in the Eucharist:

- Gathering for worship is still an important part of who we are as Anglicans. The Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer bring us together in the church to pray and to praise God. Even if a parishioner develops the flu, they can still join in Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer in their Prayer Book at home and be remembered in the prayers in the community that gathers. While most parishes have been accustomed to Communion every Sunday, the Offices may be appropriate if the flu numbers continue to climb.
- At the Celebration of the Eucharist, all those who will handle the bread or the chalice must clean their hands before doing so. Soap and water or the various hand sanitizers, should be available, be used and be seen to be used.
- Intinction, the dipping of the bread wafer into the chalice, is not an acceptable practice. While some have argued that the special "intinction chalice" solves the problem, there is no evidence to support this claim. Hands are the biggest source of contamination. If someone does not wish to drink from the common cup, then they should receive the bread only.
- The use of the common chalice has become problematic for some. While there is no medical evidence to connect drinking from the chalice to getting the flu, those who are not convinced should simply refrain from drinking the wine for this time. Those whose health is already at risk (treatment for cancer, immune system disorder, etc.) can arrange for a Private Communion.
- People who are sneezing, sniffing or coughing should not be distributing communion. This includes the clergy.

- Many public buildings now have hand sanitizer dispensers at the entries and along the pews. Your congregation should provide these.
- Shaking hands at the Peace is a good sign of being at peace with God and your neighbour. However, hands spread germs. Use hand cleanser after the Peace and before receiving the bread and wine, or discontinue shaking hands.

If any disease causes the Provincial Health Officer to suggest that congregations do not gather in order to decrease the risk of spreading disease, or hospitals and homes for care are closed to visitors, you will need to have a plan for staying in touch with your parishioners. You and your Parish Council should have this plan worked out by now.

I hope that this is helpful. We must do what is appropriate to reduce the risk of disease, because we are about the ministry of healing. At the same time, we must continue to worship God and care for the people entrusted to our care.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sue".

SEM/kja
encl.