

## Liturgical Recommendations in Response to an Epidemic

An epidemic is a large-scale outbreak of an infectious disease, such as influenza or coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Our role in responding, as churches, dioceses and compassionate Christians, is to:

- Combat fear with knowledge in order to encourage preparedness and decrease stigma.
- Maintain operational continuity and continue worship life in the case of potential quarantine and disruption.
- Show God's compassion and care to those in our communities who are affected.

These are liturgical recommendations; decisions should be made in collaboration with Church leadership and health authorities, based on local practices and safety concerns:

- Remind congregants not to come to church or meetings if they feel ill
- Encourage clergy and lay eucharistic ministers to wash hands with soap and water before services and use hand sanitizer before distributing communion; also provide hand sanitizer for congregational use
- Expand or remind clergy of your policies regarding sick leave for clergy. Do you have supply clergy available? Do you encourage lay-led Morning Prayer services? Remind leaders that they should model the behaviors you're asking from congregants, especially about staying home when ill
- If desired by the congregation, adapt rituals to minimize personal contact:
  - Sharing of the Peace: waving is perfectly acceptable in place of shaking hands or hugging.
  - Communion: those who are concerned should abstain from communion or receive "in one kind."
  - Use of the common cup with proper purificator procedure presents a relatively low risk.
  - Hands are the dirtiest part of the body; therefore, intinction is not recommended. If choosing intinction, allow the Eucharistic minister to intinct the Eucharistic bread for you—it's just as valid to bow to the chalice. Intinction is only feasible when wafers are used.
  - Wipe the chalice between communicants on the inside as well as the outside.
  - Open the purificator to its full size so a clean part of the purificator is used for each communicant. It may be necessary for the minister to use more than one purificator.



- Wipe the chalice so that the next communicant does not drink out of the same place on the cup.
- Chalices should be washed with soap and water following each Eucharistic liturgy.

If there is an outbreak in your area, please consult local public health authorities. You might consider taking the following steps:

- Water in the fonts should be drained, and the practice of dipping the hands in the water of a font, discontinued.
- Use new water for each person during baptism.
- Home visits should be restricted to ordained persons and Eucharistic Visitors should not be deployed until further notice.
- Do not pass the offering plate. Instead, instruct ushers to bring the plate around, or set the plate in one spot and have people come up to put in their offerings.