Dear Friends,

We have all heard the news about COVID-19 as it comes to the United States. Here at Trinity we are taking common sense approaches to help curb its spread. I ask you to read this information carefully, and I hope that it will answer many of your questions.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) offers these general guidelines to minimize transmission:
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
  - Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

The Diocese of Lexington has shared these protocols from Episcopal Relief and Development as we all face the potential spread of COVID-19:
- In parallel with the CDC, they recommend that if you feel ill, you do not come to worship or church meetings.
- Encourage clergy (and I would add here at Trinity, all those assisting at the service, even greeters, readers and intercessors) to wash their hands with soap and water before services (see the CDC guidelines above) and for those distributing communion to use hand sanitizer before doing so.
  - At Trinity we have hand sanitizing stations at both the narthex and transept doors—I would encourage to use one of them as you enter for worship; we also have a station outside the May Room, and I would encourage you to use it as you come to coffee hour.
- Avoid shaking hands at the passing of the peace
  - At Trinity, I have encouraged people to fist bump or elbow bump, simply wave, or give the peace sign to their neighbors.
- Avoid communion by intinction, that is, having parishioners dip the consecrated bread into the chalice.

Regarding Intinction:
- I recognize that for many people, this is a vital part of their spiritual practice. By adopting these precautions, we do not seek to diminish people’s spiritual experiences, but to keep people as safe as we can.
- To many, it seems counterintuitive to encourage people to drink from a common cup, and to discourage intinction.
- However, your hands come in contact with many more potentially infected surfaces than does your mouth. And while many people are careful when they intinct to avoid touching the wine, inevitably some fingers will come in contact with it. If these fingers are dirty, they present a greater risk of passing an infection—colds, flu, or COVID-19—than does drinking from the common cup.

Regarding the Common Cup:
- As I said, it may seem counterintuitive that there is less risk in receiving from the common cup than through intinction.
- The Bishops in the Diocese of New York point out there is “very little risk in the use of the common cup if a clean cloth is used to wipe the inside and outside lip of chalice after each person receives.” I have instructed those who bear the chalice in worship to be vigilant in this practice.
  - While silver has a mild anti-microbial effect, the Bishops go on to point out that it is the mechanical action of wiping the chalice that is the most help in removing any germs and viruses. At Trinity this means that even though we are using pottery during Lent, it is still safer to drink from the common cup than to intinct.

Regarding receiving the communion bread only:
- The Bishops in New York also say, “receiving the Sacrament ‘in one kind’ has always been, and continues to be, an acceptable alternative for communicants. While we promote the use of the common cup, we also want to offer
this option for those who prefer it since it too has ancient precedent in our spiritual life. Indeed, [encouraging this practice] is designed to retain our inclusive community with its rich heritage of commonality.

- At Trinity, if you wish to receive the host only, I invite you to do so. As you come to the chalice, you may simply bow reverently to indicate that you do not wish to receive.
- In addition, if any of this makes you uncomfortable, I would invite you forward for a blessing. Simply cross your arms against your chest and a communion minister or priest will call down God’s blessing upon you.

Regarding practices at the Wednesday evening Eucharist:

- The same guidelines apply for the passing of the peace as they do for Sunday morning—fist bumps, elbow bumps, giving the peace sign or waving.
- We will discontinue having members of the congregation give one another communion; the priest will distribute first the bread and then the wine.
- The guidelines for intinction on Sunday morning also apply: people may drink from the common cup or receive the bread only.
- We will ask members of the congregation not to hold hands during the Lord’s Prayer to avoid potentially spreading the virus.

Sources Consulted:

- The Center for Disease Control (CDC.gov)
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) > What you should know > Prevention and Treatment
- The Diocese of Lexington (www.diolex.org)
- The Diocese of Toronto https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/
- “Protocols regarding the use and storage of the common cup and other interventions pertaining to the reduction of risk of transmission of contagion”


If I may answer any other questions or address your concerns, please do not hesitate to let me know.

In Christ,

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