

# Health and Safety COVID-19: Guidelines for Church and Home

**Updated: March 11, 2020; 3:00 pm**

## **Our Values**

- We will support public health initiatives as they are made known
- We will strive to protect the 15% who we know to be most vulnerable
- We will work to slow the progression of illness through prevention and mitigation

Bishop Megan reminds us to, “keep in our minds and our hearts, that these revisions and suggestions are in place for a time period. We can look with hope to the future when the guidelines suggested in this document will be unnecessary, and we will return to our usual practices.”

## **General Prevention: Keep Calm and Wash Your Hands**

- In all situations, the best practice to prevent any illness is to wash your hands frequently using proper technique: wet-lather-scrub-rinse-dry
- [https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean\\_hands\\_protection/en/](https://www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/)
- In addition to frequent and thorough hand washing, use hand sanitizer as needed
- At all times avoid touching your face: particularly eyes, nose, and mouth. This is how germs enter your body
- When you cough, do so into your bent elbow, not your hand
- If you have a fever, cough, or any congestion; or feel like you might be sick; or live with someone that is sick or exhibiting symptoms, stay home. **This applies to clergy, lay ministers, musicians, and participants**
- If you are vulnerable to illnesses, stay home. For expert guidelines on who is at risk and should stay home: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html#who-is-higher-risk>, or check with your health care provider
- Share the message: download hand washing posters here: [https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/keep-calm-wash-your-hands\\_8.5x11.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/keep-calm-wash-your-hands_8.5x11.pdf)
- Public health is divided by county in California. Please refer to your [local public health department webpage](#).

## Gathering and Worship Practices

### **Greeters and Ushers** - avoid handshakes or hugs

- Make sure that people use hand sanitizer upon entering the building
- Greet them with a smile (not a handshake) and a small dab of sanitizer
- Place bulletins on a table and guide worshipers to pick up their own

### **Offering Plates** - avoid passing the offering plate during your service

- Have a few plates placed centrally in your worship space to collect offerings
- Make announcements that explain this new procedure
- Utilize online giving

### **Font and Stoup** - Drain standing holy water from all containers

- Do not maintain a font or open vessel of standing holy water near the entrance to or anywhere in the church
- Use baptismal symbols, such as an icon of the baptism of Jesus, river rock, or even sand, to symbolize the Lenten journey, in place of water in these vessels

### **Passing the Peace** - Use an alternative greeting to shaking hands

- Bow to one another with your hands in a prayer position
- Place your hands on your heart, and say "peace be with you"
- No hugs, kisses, or getting too close to each other's faces
- Teach a greeting in ASL, such as [God loves you](#)

### **Eucharist** - Follow these steps:

- All service ministers, clergy and lay, should wash hands with soap and water directly before worship
- It is recommended that you use wafers instead of bread to minimize handling
- All service leaders should use hand sanitizer during the offertory

### **Regarding Communion Wine** - Direction from Bishop Megan:

- At the discretion of the Clergy-in-Charge, you may decide to serve communion in one kind
- Please have a small amount of wine presented at the offertory
- Pour the wine into the chalice and pray the Eucharistic Prayer, as usual, consecrating bread and wine
- Leave the chalice on the altar; there to honor and represent Christ's blood for all
- No one should consume the wine during the service
- It should be returned reverently to the earth following the service
- Use this as a time of teaching:
  - about spiritual communion
  - of the completeness of communion in one kind
  - allow space for confusion or grief
- No intinction or dipping is allowed

### **Serving Communion** - Please follow these guidelines:

- Serve the Eucharist from standing communion stations in front of the altar rail, avoiding contact with the rail, so as to minimize germ transmission.
- If you choose to serve communion in both kinds:
  - If participants do not want to sip from the common cup, let them receive the bread and acknowledge the cup as they pass the chalice bearer
  - Do not allow dipping of bread in the wine, (intinction) as it spreads germs and is unclean. The chalice bearer will not intinct either, as this is also problematic

- This is a good moment to remember a core principle of our Eucharistic theology: the sacrament is complete when administered in just one kind (in this case, the consecrated bread)

**Eucharistic Visitors and Visiting the Elderly** - Weigh the benefit to risk:

- Determine whether the visit is essential
- Follow the General Prevention guidelines outlined at the top of this document
- Do not put yourself or others at risk of getting ill
- If you are feeling sick, or hear that the one you are to visit is feeling ill, don't visit
- Engage these folks with virtual visits through a phone call or video calling (FaceTime)
  - This may involve some teaching in how to use this technology
  - Work with staff and caregivers to help instruct the parishioner
- Follow the recommendations of the public health departments and the care facilities in your area

**Cleaning** - There are several cleaning practices that should be observed:

- Sanitize the rail after each service
- Sanitize pew/chair tops after each service
- Clean communion vessels thoroughly after each service with soap and hot water
- Use new linen for each service
- Sanitize doorknobs and push bars after each service
- Sanitize all spaces after use: table tops, chairs, counter tops, etc.
- Organize volunteer teams to sanitize a room after use
  - Require the group using the space to sanitize as a condition of using the space

## Preventative measures for home and church

**Be ready at home:**

If you or a loved one gets sick and is asked to self-quarantine, here are some things you might want to have on hand as an extra supply:

- Paper and cleaning products for your household
- Canned goods and other non-perishable food items so you don't have to go to the grocery store if you're feeling bad. Make sure to include some treats: chocolate, coffee, tea, other comfort food items
- Medicine – order an extra month's supply of essential meds so that you don't have to wait in line at a pharmacy, or go without if supply lines are disrupted
- Extra medicines and supplies for respiratory illness
- Health organization guidelines:
  - [Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC)
  - [Guidelines from the American Red Cross](#)
  - [Guidelines from the World Health Organization](#) (WHO)
  - We are a large diocese. Please consult your [local county health department webpage](#) for local information

**Plan for possible school closings:**

- Coordinate with other families for care
- Have supplies on hand for continued learning and activity

### **Be ready at church:**

- Follow the current guidelines for the prudent care of your people. In addition to the instructions to avoid intinction, those who are concerned should just receive communion in one kind: the blessed bread. After receiving the bread, simply cross your arms and acknowledge the chalice
- Make sure telephone lists are up to date; especially noting those in any health frailty
- Practice your parish phone tree, and make sure that you have designated leaders assigned to check in by phone with your members
- We will not cancel worship. We worship God regularly, including Sunday worship, and we expect our clergy to lead Sunday worship and proclaim the Gospel. There are many parishioners who have already chosen to stay home for personal health reasons. We need to plan for this and make alternate virtual worship available as the need arises
- Be ready to support prayer at home so those who need to refrain from crowds will be connected:
  - With a guide for simple morning prayer and daily home worship
  - Providing worship online through another church's link
  - Streaming your own worship, so home-bound members can participate
  - Worship resources:
    - The Mission of St. Clare provides [Morning and Evening Prayer online](#)
    - Here is a link to their mobile apps for [iPhone or iPad](#) and [Android](#)
  - Streaming Resources:
    - [Facebook Live](#)
      - [printable version](#)
    - [FaceTime](#)
      - [printable version](#)
    - Our communications office stands ready to help. Please email us at [communications@norcalepiscopal.org](mailto:communications@norcalepiscopal.org) with your questions
- We are working with our deans and other church leaders to support one another in alternate worship possibilities and will share resources [here](#) in the coming days

At this time, we do not anticipate that you would need to close your church building. If we are asked by public health officials to cancel events, we will ask you to use virtual meetings, if possible. We encourage you to make gatherings and meetings available virtually, but that at minimum the clergy, wardens, and key lay leaders will keep our doors open and provide safe gathering spaces for those who choose to come to us. We will discuss church closures on a case by case basis in the unlikely event of a major quarantine.

*Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of your servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, we may ever be*

*defended by your gracious and ready help; through Jesus  
Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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