

March 3, 2020

Faith and Facts in a Climate of Fear

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are writing to you about COVID-19, the coronavirus disease currently affecting the lives of many around the globe. Much advice and information has already been disseminated—and rather than repeating it all, we refer you to the *Episcopal Relief & Development* website, which has an excellent page titled *Faith-Based Responses to Epidemics*. You can reach this page by entering <https://episnyd.io/erd> in your browser or by going to www.episcopalrelief.org and following the links.

We also offer these simple guidelines for adaptations of services:

- Remind congregants not to come to church or meetings if they feel ill.
- Clergy should wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before services and use hand sanitizer before distributing communion.
- Provide hand sanitizer for congregational use.
- If desired by the congregation, adapt rituals to minimize personal contact.
- Communion: those who are ill should stay home; those who are concerned may abstain from communion or receive “in one kind” (host only); use of the common cup with proper purificator procedure presents relatively low risk; intinction should be avoided.
- Sharing of the Peace: waving or bowing are perfectly acceptable in place of shaking hands or hugging.

Above all, we should be compassionate, and ground our actions in faith and facts.

Episcopal Relief & Development puts this well on the page linked to above:

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.

Today we express our profound gratitude for your own leadership and discernment. We have already read and experienced, in our congregations and communities, thoughtful, measured, and helpful responses to the COVID-19 outbreak.

As becomes necessary and as the situation evolves, we will communicate further.

We close with a prayer.

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP, p. 832)



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