

October 2009

Dear Clergy,

After considerable reflection on the matter of the H1N1 virus and other possible pandemic viruses, and following consultation with infectious disease specialist, Dr. Scott Miller (St. Aidan's, Virginia Beach), I have concluded that at this time the best policy for me to establish is one of simply making some clear cut recommendations to you regarding preventative measures. It very well may be that in the future, if the virus becomes a major health problem, a more direct policy from my office will be necessary. We will pray not.

I make the following recommendations believing full well that the common cup is a central and essential symbol of our faith tradition as the bearer of the presence of Christ in our common worship. Please make sure that any policy you adopt in your respective parishes does not unintentionally lessen the importance of the common cup in the eyes of those who receive it. Simply stating your theology of its importance may help prevent this.

Recommendations:

1. ***Emphasize to parish members that anyone who is sick should not come to church!*** This of course would also apply to the clergy, who in my experience are, often out of necessity, the worst offenders in this regard.
2. Consider making anti-bacterial hand cleaners available at the entrance of the church or even possibly available in the pews.
3. Be aware of the fact that activities during the service where people come in contact with one another, such as the Peace or holding hands during the Lord's Prayer or Prayers of the People, actually have a greater potential to spread the virus than the common cup. In fact, according to medical experts, the spread of disease through the common cup has not been shown to be significant.
4. Require all who administer communion to use anti-bacterial hand cleaner immediately prior to distribution.
5. Assure church members that if they are in any way immune compromised and choose not to receive the communion wine that their communion is none-the-less sufficient (rubrics, *Book of Common Prayer*.)
6. Make alcohol wipes available at the altar so that those who administer the wine can use them to wipe the cup regularly.
7. Consider having the Eucharistic ministers do the intinction for those who receive at the rail. Fingers spread more germs than mouths.

I hope these recommendations will be of some help to you. After all, most of the above is simply a matter of common sense.

During the flu season I will continue to be in contact with Dr. Miller. He has offered to update me as he receives information from the CDC and health agencies in our region. I will alert you to all vital information as I receive it.

In Christ,

Holly Hollerith