

The Right Reverend  
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Bishop of Toronto



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### PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CLERGY AND PEOPLE IN THE DIOCESE OF TORONTO

*(To be read at every service on March 8, 2020 and then posted or published in each parish for the duration of the protocol.)*

Dear Friends in Christ:

We continue to monitor the unfolding situation with COVID-19 (Coronavirus). We are aware that many people are anxious about the apparent lack of containment for this disease. We pray for all those who are dealing with this virus: patients and their families, and the health-care workers and scientists who are searching for a cure.

It is the informed opinion of our Bishop's Committee on the Healing Ministries, chaired by the Rev. Canon Joanne Davies, chaplain at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre's Bayview Campus and St John's Rehab, that the time has come to alter our liturgical practices.

As was the case during the SARS epidemic of 2003, here in the Diocese of Toronto **we are suspending the sharing of the common cup at celebrations of the Eucharist**. Presiding celebrants are to consecrate both the bread and the wine, and to consume in both kinds, but to administer only the bread to the rest of the congregation. The Church's ancient teaching is that the whole Christ is received whether one receives only consecrated bread or both bread and wine. This protocol is effective today and to be continued until further notice.

Additionally, **we are advising people to share words and smiles only, not handshakes or hugs, during the Exchange of the Peace**. Those churches that have repositories of still water, for example fonts or stoops, are to refresh the water daily or discontinue their use at this time. We ask every Anglican to practice rigorous handwashing and to self-quarantine at home if feeling unwell.

Together all of us can help mitigate both risk and fear in our communities by exercising this due diligence.

Our normal liturgical customs are important to us, and we hope to reinstate them as soon as we are advised that the risk of transmission has been better contained.

We believe that gathering for corporate worship as the Body of Christ is an integral part of, and not antithetical to, healthy living. We encourage our parishioners and worshipping communities to continue to meet and offer prayers and praise to our merciful God, who in the person of Jesus offers us the gifts of hope and healing for fullness of life.

May God richly bless you all in this Season of Lent.

Yours in Christ,

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