

*A Pastoral Letter to the People of the Diocese of East Carolina*  
*October 2009*

Dear Friends throughout our Diocese of East Carolina,

There has been a great deal of recent news and attention given to the spread of the H1N1 (“swine flu”) virus and the prevention of its spread. I write to you now to share some thoughts about how we might respond to concerns within our diocese around health safety and flu prevention practices in our congregations. In this letter, I hope to give some very brief and basic direction regarding prevention and direct your attention to other resources that will offer fuller and more complete information and assistance in dealing with flu prevention in a communal setting.

First, let me remind us all that influenza isn’t the only thing that is contagious. Christianity is contagious too. C.S. Lewis called Christianity “the good infection.” Acts of self-sacrifice, hospitality, service of others and generosity rooted in the love of Jesus are contagious in their own way. While I urge all our congregations to do all that we can to prevent the spread of the flu, I also urge all of us to do all that we can to spread the “good infection” of Christian love for our neighbor and service for those who are ill or in need. St. Paul calls our bodies “a temple of the Holy Spirit” and our Baptismal Covenant calls each of us to respect the dignity of all people. Let all that we do to promote health and healthy practices within our congregations in this flu season be rooted in our Gospel value of love of neighbor and love of self.

It is my understanding that the H1N1 flu virus is air-borne and therefore easily transmitted through sneezes and coughs, as well as through touching surfaces on which the virus may have settled, where it may live for several minutes. With this in mind, let me offer some suggestions as to how we might minimize transmission of the virus in our church settings:

First, wash your hands often and if you are ill, stay home (!).

Second, Churches should place bottles of hand sanitizer at convenient places throughout the church and parish buildings and encourage everyone to use them.

Third, all surfaces throughout the church should be cleaned regularly and thoroughly. Special attention in cleaning should be given to nurseries and Sunday School rooms, toys and other shared objects.

Many concerns that I have heard relate especially to worship, the passing of the peace and the administration and reception of Communion. In terms of worship etiquette and concern for others:

- If you are feeling ill, stay home. This is one way of showing love and concern for your neighbor, as well as yourself. If you are not able to attend church, you may make a spiritual communion using the form attached to this letter, which in the circumstance of illness counts as a valid communion as if you had received the physical sacrament.
- in the passing of the peace: besides a handshake or embrace, there are other ways of greeting one another in the name of the Lord and passing the peace – an elbow bump, perhaps, a courteous bow or curtsy to your neighbor, your hands folded in a prayerful position in front of your chest and a nod of the head while saying, “The Peace of the Lord be always with you.”

Regarding the receiving of Communion:

- Priests, Deacons and Chalice Bearers should always cleanse their hands with an alcohol cleanser immediately prior to the administration of Communion.
- As far as I know, the common cup has never been linked to the spread of disease. Since silver has antibacterial properties, I am strongly urging the use of only silver chalices and forgoing the use of ceramic or glass vessels during the flu season. With the combination of the precious metal used for the chalice, the presence of alcohol (using a fortified wine like Sherry or Port) and a vigorous wipe of the rim of the cup, I believe distribution from the “common cup” remains a reasonable means of receiving the sacrament.

- The practice of Intinction (i.e., dipping the wafer in the chalice rather than drinking from it) is also an acceptable means of receiving the sacrament. However, since intinction as it is often practiced is not sanitary since many dirty fingers may touch the wine in the chalice, if intinction is a custom which you wish to use, it is most important that you – and your children – allow the host to remain in your hand until the chalice bearer takes the wafer from you, dips it in the chalice and then places the wafer on your extended tongue, without touching either the wine in the chalice or your tongue.

These are only a few and brief suggestions. There is more information to be found on our diocesan website ([www.diocese-eastcarolina.org](http://www.diocese-eastcarolina.org)) and I urge you to visit the site for more complete and comprehensive news, resources and internet links regarding the H1N1 Virus.

As always, I urge all and each of us to pray for the health and well-being of others and for relief from suffering and disease. You might want to use prayers for the sick as found in *The Book of Common Prayer* on pages 458 – 461.

May the Peace of Christ, the Blessing of God and the Healing Power of the Holy Spirit be with us all this day and forever.

I remain, Faithfully,

your Bishop,

Clifton Daniel, 3<sup>rd</sup>  
VII Bishop of East Carolina

*(This Letter may be read during worship in place of a sermon  
or it may be included in a Sunday bulletin or newsletter.)*

***A Form for the Receiving of Spiritual Communion in the Diocese of East Carolina  
during a time of Widespread Illness***

*When, for reasons of illness, infirmity or other serious reasons preventing, it is impossible to attend Church and to make a sacramental Communion, the Bishop has authorized the following form for use, as adapted from the form for "Communion under Special Circumstances" found in The Book of Common Prayer, pages 396-399. If one finds it necessary to use this form, you are urged to contact your local Priest or congregation to arrange for the Sacrament to be brought to you.*

*The parts of the following service in italics are directions; all other portions are said. The service begins:*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A reading from the Gospel of John: Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."  
*(John 6:35)*

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

*(A time of silence may follow in which you ask God's forgiveness of sins, and are assured of the same.)*

*The following hymn (#310, The Hymnal 1982) or some other hymn may be said:*

O saving Victim, opening wide the gate of heaven to us below,  
Our foes press on from every side, Thine aid supply, thy strength bestow.  
All praise and thanks to thee ascend for evermore, blest One in Three;  
O grant us life that shall not end in our true native land with thee.

*The Lord's Prayer is said:*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*The following prayer is said:*

O Most blessed Savior, in union with the faithful at every altar of your Church where the blessed Sacrament of your Body and Blood is adored and received, I desire to offer you my praise and thanksgiving with all your faithful people. I present to you my soul and body with the earnest wish that I may always be united to you. And since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I beseech you to come spiritually into my heart. I unite myself to you and embrace you with all the affections of my soul. Come, Lord Jesus, and dwell in my heart. Amen.

*Silent meditation may follow.*

*The following may be said:*

Soul of Christ, sanctify me; Body of Christ, save me; Blood of Christ, inebriate me; Water from the side of Christ, wash me; Passion of Christ, strengthen me; O good Jesu, hear me; Within thy wounds hide me; Suffer me not to be separated from thee; From the malicious enemy defend me; In the hour of my death call me, And bid me come to thee. That with thy Saints I may praise thee for ever and ever. Amen.

*The service concludes with:*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all  
evermore. Amen.  
*(2 Corinthians 13:14)*

*October 2009*