

June 12, 2009

I write this on behalf of the Bishops and in response to yesterday's declaration by the World Health Organization (WHO) that the H1N1 Influenza A Virus has reached Pandemic status because of its continued spread around the globe. The Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan emphasized that the raising of the alert to level 6 was in response to the spread of the virus, not the severity. Approximately 1/3 of the world's countries have reported just under 30,000 confirmed cases, and there is no sign that the pace will slow. The WHO however recognizes that most cases are moderate in severity and the majority of those infected make a full recovery, often without medical intervention. WHO is not changing its general position on the virus, and so is not recommending that there should be any travel or trade bans instituted.

The diocese is taking a similar approach and not asking our parishes to escalate the response, unless outbreaks in the local community warrant it. Therefore the following measures remain in effect:

1. Despite my optimistic statement at Synod, ***congregations are urged to return to the recommendation of restraint during the passing of the peace, and at other times of greeting at our gatherings.*** The original recommendation of using the Book of Common Prayer pattern of versicle and response is still an effective way of accomplishing this goal in our liturgy.
2. ***Intinction is still strongly discouraged.*** I recognize that there is a significant difference of opinion on the merits of this position, I rely on the experience of our neighbouring dioceses of Niagara and Toronto, which have been limiting intinction for a number of years. The London and Middlesex Health Unit has recently indicated that intinction may be a safe alternative to the common cup if the members of the congregation wash their hands thoroughly and use alcohol-based (at least 70%) hand sanitizer. Since we cannot assure that this will always be possible, we have taken the position that intinction should not be used. Parishioners who are uncomfortable with the alternative of sipping from the common cup are reminded that communion in one kind is an acceptable tradition within the Anglican Church.

Thank you for your continued support, care, and pastoral concern as we attempt to respond faithfully and prudently to the spread of this virus, yet also attempt to avoid excessive fear.

Blessings to all,
The Ven. Willi Kammerer
Archdeacon of the Thames Valley
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