The Bishop and staff are working on guidelines to post on the diocesan website and to send to congregations regarding appropriate responses to potential widespread illnesses, based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information.

Until then, some simple guidelines for addressing concerns about contagious diseases in churches include the following:

- **Encourage frequent handwashing and provide instruction on proper handwashing technique.**
  Provide plenty of soap and paper towels in restrooms and kitchens. Place containers of hand sanitizer in the pews, near doors, and beside tissue boxes to be used when handwashing is not readily available.

- **The Peace**—You may wish to invite worshipers to remain in their pews/seats and bow to one another at the Peace, thus indicating a respectful acknowledgment of each other while having no physical contact.

- **The Holy Eucharist** may be received in one kind, offering the consecrated bread distributed by those individuals who have cleaned their hands. Intinction is not a sanitary substitute for drinking from the chalice. Ask the altar guild to clean handrails and the altar rail before and after each service.

- **The receiving line** following the service should include conversation but omit physical contact.

- **Coffee Hour**—Food may be served by individuals who have washed their hands, put on serving gloves, and are using tongs to minimize the touching of food. Either paper plates and napkins or a dishwasher with a water temperature setting hot enough to kill germs should be used for cleanup. Similarly, beverages should be served by individuals who have washed their hands and are wearing gloves to minimize the number of people handling beverage containers.

- **When parishioners are not feeling well**—Encourage people who are not feeling well to stay at home. The clergy or lay ministers can bring the sacraments to shut-ins and/or provide pastoral care by phone as appropriate. Substitutes can be found for Sunday ministries.

- **Large gatherings or events**—Consider rescheduling if possible or canceling if necessary.

*It is essential that you communicate whatever choices you make with the congregation.* Explain what you are choosing to do and why. You can alert people of changes through emails, newsletters, in the worship bulletin, and in announcements.

While many are worried about the COVID19 virus spreading, this is already a bad flu season. If people have not gotten a flu vaccine, there’s still time before the expected second wave of seasonal flu infections.

The phone number to contact the Rhode Island Dept. Of Health is 401-444-5960 if you have additional questions or you can visit their website at [https://health.ri.gov](https://health.ri.gov)
Guidance for churches, from the Church of England

This guidance, which draws on advice about best practice from the NHS and Public Health England is designed to:

- Help you to develop and enhance local preparations.
- Enable you to continue to provide spiritual and pastoral care to your parishes and those within the wider community.
- Explain how people engaged in pastoral ministry with individuals who are or may be infected can protect themselves, their families and the people they work within the course of their daily work.
- Ensure that parishes and chaplaincy teams maintain their presence as agents of spiritual and pastoral care in a way that both protects those engaged in ministry and protects those who need their support and help.

In light of the continued increase of Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in the United Kingdom, our guidance is to suspend the administration of the chalice as well as physical contact during the sharing of the Peace, blessing or "laying on of hands". We advise that all priests should:

- **Offer** Communion in one kind only to all communicants i.e. the consecrated bread/wafer/host, with the priest alone taking the wine;
- **Suspend handshaking** or other direct physical contact during the sharing of the Peace;
- **Suspend direct physical contact** as part of a blessing or "laying on of hands".

What should churches do now?

*Please note that ‘Washing hands’ always refers to washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand-sanitiser with minimum 60% alcohol content. See NHS guidance and download a poster version to display.*

1. Ensure **everyone maintains good hygiene** (we should be doing this already as part of normal good practice) at all gatherings, whether services or other occasions. This includes those who prepare or serve food, those handing out books etc or having other direct physical contact with numbers of people, as well as those administering the Eucharist (see below for more guidance):
   a. Provide hand gel at entrances and ensure there is a good supply of soap or hand gel in cloakrooms and kitchens and any other appropriate areas.
2. The best way of protecting us from the spread is for everyone to use **universal good hygiene**, - this means everyone, all the time, which will effectively disrupt the spread of the virus. Display the public information poster attached, which states:
   a. **Catch it** – sneeze into a tissue.
   b. **Bin it** – bin the tissue.
   c. **Kill it** – wash your hands.
3. Churches are encouraged to complete a **Coronavirus Parish Continuity Plan** to ensure, as far as possible, their continued mission and ministry.
4. **Intinction is not recommended** as an alternative to the Common Chalice/Cup. It is a route for transmission from the individual through handling the wafer/bread/host, and tiny fragments could affect people with allergies to gluten etc.
5. Please note that the **distribution of individual cups** for use by communicants is **not a lawful practice** in the Church of England.
6. Ask **those attending services to wash their hands** as they come into church.
7. Ensure **ministers of the Eucharist wash their hands** before and after distributing communion.
8. **Suspend catering** (teas, coffees etc.) where multiple people touch mugs, utensils and foodstuffs.
9. **No pastoral visits should be undertaken to people who are self-isolating** until isolation ends. However do offer phone support.
10. When **visiting parishioners at home**, wash hands before and after giving the sacraments.
11. **Refrain from passing collection plates** around.
12. **Suspend the use of holy water stoups.**
13. **Wash vestments** (surplices, cassocks) on the hottest cycle you can without damaging them. Chasubles etc. which could become contaminated, may not be able to be washed. Instead, they should be securely stored away from people, ideally in a well ventilated and brightly sunlit area, for at least 48 hours before re-use.
14. **Visits to people in care homes or Hospitals** should follow advice from the staff on infection control.
15. Ensure **good regular cleaning of surfaces people touch regularly**, including such things as door handles, light switches etc.