

Christ instructed us to 'Love our neighbour as ourselves'. In love we care for ourselves and each other. This can be expressed in numerous ways. One way is to implement strategies to reduce the possibility of disease transmission in our faith communities and our liturgical practice.

Wherever people congregate there is a risk of disease transmission. The faith community is no different. The purpose of this document is to provide practical guidelines and protocols for reducing the risk of disease transmission in our faith communities during worship and the liturgy. Because we do not live in a sterile environment, it is not possible to reduce all risk, however, by implementing strategies at all times the risk of transmission can be reduced.

There needs to be a route or chain for disease causing germs to spread. Germs can be spread directly from person to person as in handshaking, or indirectly from an infected person to a surface then to another person who comes in contact with the contaminated surface. Breaking the route or chain of infection will eliminate or reduce the risk of transmission.

For germs to cause illness they must enter the body. The most common areas of entry are the eyes, mouth and nose. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs then touches their mouth, nose or eyes. When food is touched germs are transferred to the food which is then ingested.

Each congregation is unique and may have specific needs, however, there are also commonalities. The following information may be adapted to meet the needs of each congregation in reducing the risk of spreading germs.

Hand hygiene is the single most important thing we can do to help reduce the spread of germs to ourselves, our family, friends and strangers.

Frequent hand hygiene and keeping hands away from our face will aid in the prevention of disease transmission.

Wash hands often with soap and water.

Wet hands with running water

Add soap

Rub hands together for 20 seconds to make a lather

Wash front and back of hands, between fingers, thumbs, under fingernails and wrists

Rinse hands well under water letting the water run into the sink not down the elbows

Dry hands with clean paper towel

Turn water off using the paper towel and place in proper receptacle.



Where soap and water are unavailable the use of a hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol is recommended.

Hand sanitizers may be used to sanitize hands when they are not visibly dirty.

Apply about 1 teaspoonful or 5ml. of hand sanitizer to the palm of one hand.

Rub all over front and back of hands, thumbs, between fingers, fingernails and wrists.

Allow hand sanitizer to dry (about 30 seconds).

For hand sanitizer to be effective it must be allowed to air dry on the hands.

Request all who enter the premises to use hand sanitizer.

- Provide hand sanitizer at all entry points to the faith building. Post signage inviting all who enter to use hand sanitizer upon entry into the building.
- Place hand sanitizer in convenient locations to be used by all in attendance for use following the peace and prior to receiving communion. Multiple locations for hand sanitizer may be considered when there are multiple communion stations.
- Consider placing hand sanitizer in all office spaces, especially where donations are counted or in high traffic areas and where food or beverages are served.
- Have a designated person(s) to monitor the hand sanitizing stations for supply and have replacement supply readily available.
- All clergy and the chancel party should use hand sanitizer prior to the beginning of worship.

SHARING THE PEACE:

Traditionally, the sharing of the Peace is with a handshake. Encouraging an alternative greeting such as a bow with words, folded hands and a shared smile will aid in reducing risk of disease transmission.

If partaking in hugs and handshakes hands should be clean and participants well. The use of hand sanitizer should be encouraged by everyone immediately following the peace.

Following the exchange of the Peace all clergy and the chancel party should use hand sanitizer.

PREPARING AND RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Urge all persons to use hand sanitizer immediately before receiving communion allowing time for sanitizer to dry.

Officiant(s) should use hand sanitizer prior to preparing the table and immediately prior to distributing the elements.

The presider may also use hand sanitizer following the last touch of the missal prior to serving the bread. The lavabo bowl and towel is a symbolic act used only by the presiding celebrant. Hand sanitizer should be reapplied if, at any time, the face or hair has been touched.

Communion ministers shall exercise extreme care when wiping the chalice with the purificator to ensure effective cleansing. Wipe firmly wherever someone's mouth might have touched. Then, turn the chalice so the next person drinks from a different place. Use a different part of the purificator after each person.

Purificators should be replaced frequently during communion, after every 4 or 5 communicants.

Receiving in one kind is encouraged if someone is anxious or concerned about transmission.

“The Church’s ancient teaching is that the whole Christ is received whether one receives consecrated bread only or bread and wine.” ~Bishop Andrew Asbil, 03/2020

Since April 2009 the Diocese of Toronto prohibits the use of intinction in public worship. Dipping the wafer into the wine may cause the wine to be contaminated.

If a member of the chancel party leaves the sanctuary for any reason hand sanitizer should be reapplied upon returning to the sanctuary.

UNWELL CLERGY AND PARISHIONERS

Parishioners and clergy are to refrain from attending services when ill.

Clergy may consider creating a plan for congregational support in the event they become ill unexpectedly and are unable to obtain clerical coverage.

Urge everyone to cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Coughing or sneezing into a facial tissue or into a sleeve will aid in reducing transmission of germs. Used tissue should be placed in a waste basket and hands cleaned with hand sanitizer.

Clean most often touched areas such as door handles, hand railings and altar rails on a regular schedule.

PROTOCOLS FOR CLEANING AND STORAGE OF THE COMMON CUP AND PATEN, OTHER VESSELS AND PURIFICATORS

After each use chalices, patens, cruets and ciborium are to be cleaned with hot water and soap and stored in cupboards, a covered area or in containers.

Purificators are washed in soap and hot water and stored in sealed containers between use.

All other linens are washed in soap and hot water and stored in sealed containers or covered areas between use.

“ Let’s share the Spirit. Not the germs.”

Reducing Risk of Infection during Worship and Liturgical Practice

Posters on Hand Washing; Hand Sanitizing and Cover Your Cough may be available for downloading from your Public Health Unit, Public Health Canada and/or Public Health Ontario

Revised and updated 03/2022
by The Bishop’s Committee on Healing Ministries