

October 28, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Concerns about the H1N1 flu virus have become part of our everyday lives. Government health authorities are calling on all citizens to exercise reasonable precautions to both avoid personal illness and contain the spread of the virus as much as possible. We have developed a plan for addressing this health concern which will be implemented progressively, with some actions taken immediately and others as soon as necessary and practicable.

Healthy Practices During Flu Season

Whether you have contracted the seasonal flu, H1N1, or a common cold, the following practices make sense for limiting the spread of the contagion. Only a medical professional can tell you for sure if you have H1N1. See your doctor if you have a combination of some of these symptoms: cough, chest pain, fever, body aches, headache, sore throat, or vomiting.

- Wash hands frequently for 20 seconds with soap and water. If not available use an alcohol hand sanitizer. There are also non-alcohol versions available if needed.
- When you are sick, stay home and rest. If you are exhibiting any of the symptoms above, please think twice before coming to church. We will miss your presence, of course. Your act of Christian love, however, is expressed in not exposing others to what you carry.
- When you blow your nose or sneeze do it into a tissue and dispose of the tissue, and then remember to wash or sanitize your hands.
- Cough into your elbow or shoulder instead of your hands. If you use your hands then wash them.
- Don't return to public life until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications.
- Keep a good food supply and over the counter medications on hand. Also keep prescription medications from running low. If you do get ill you will have these important supplies.

Our Life Together

- There are bottles of hand-sanitizing gel around the building. Please use them. Bring your own and use it after sharing the "peace of the Lord" and before receiving Holy Communion.
- During worship you may choose to share the peace with a verbal greeting and a brief bow or nod of the head, instead of a handshake, which still physically acknowledges the other person. If you intend to do this, simply fold your hands in front of your chest so others know not to extend a hand.
- Wash your hands when you get home (just like you would if you had been to the grocery store or any other public place).

Interim Holy Communion Practices

Changes to communion practices can be, at times, emotional and stressful. We ask for your patience and understanding as we try to deal faithfully with the challenges that H1N1 presents. The plan developed is informed by the direction from the ELCA and information from the CDC. Both resources can be accessed on the web at: http://www.makingchristknown.org/clc/h1n1_flu_infomation. Studies that assess the various methods of communing from a health perspective and a review of what other denominations who have similar worship practices are doing were also consulted.

Our past practice has been to offer wine and grape juice in ceramic vessels. The method of distribution has been intinction (bread dipped in the liquid). The problems with current practice are: 1) ceramic vessels are porous and allow the germs to settle in and grow, 2) low alcohol content wine and especially grape juice are also breeding grounds for germs, and 3) intinction allows the finger tips of each person to potentially enter the wine or juice bringing a host of bacteria and viruses to the cup and wine or juice. To distribute communion in a way that both addresses health concerns and is faithful to the sacrament of the

Church, the following changes are being made to our communion practices and will be implemented as soon as this coming Sunday, November 1, and no later than November 8th:

- We will change from ceramic chalices to metal ones. The properties of the metal do not absorb or retain germs and are shown to be germ inhibiting.
- We will suspend the use of grape juice until the heightened flu concerns are behind us.
- Pastors and assisting ministers serving the bread will continue the practice of sanitizing their hands before distributing communion.
- We will begin using a wine with higher alcohol content.
- We will offer this wine to be taken in one of two ways: 1) we will continue the practice of intinction; 2) we will offer the common cup (the participant takes a sip from the chalice). The person holding the common cup wipes the rim with a cloth (purificator). While it may seem contrary to logic, this later way of receiving the wine is actually more sanitary than intinction. We recognize that people have preferences, so we offer both methods. Intinction may still be the most practical way for young children to receive the wine versus sipping wine from the common cup. That decision is left to the parents.
- A third option – especially to be used if you have any symptoms at all – is to receive communion in “one kind” which means that you only eat the bread. Please note that you still should hear *two* pronouncements of grace. So, stand in front of the intinction cup with hands folded and hear the words, “the blood of Christ shed for you,” and return to your seat.
- When you come forward for communion there will still be two cups at each station. The first cup will be the intinction cup and the cup to hear the blessing if you are communing in “one kind” (just bread); the second will be the common cup from which members may sip the wine.
- If you are involved in communion preparation, take care of linens, serve as an assisting minister or communion assistant, you will be receiving an update to procedures under separate cover. We also plan some training time to address questions as soon as possible.

In Christ,

Timothy V. Olson
Senior Pastor