



# THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

## STANDING COMMITTEE

March 12, 2020

Dear Faithful People of the Diocese of South Carolina,

Since last week, the number of people affected by COVID-19 has increased significantly in the United States and around the world. There is still much uncertainty about how widespread the virus actually is and how far it will go; as well as what to do about it. Your diocesan leadership is aware of the kinds of precautions other dioceses and churches are suggesting and practicing in response to this pandemic.

Certainly there are questions about how we continue to be the church in this time. The answer is quite simple. Be the church. Continue to worship God. Continue to love your neighbor. Each community and individual will discern how best to do that. In this current period of time when “social distancing” is recommended to help battle the virus, we trust that your church communities will make appropriate and well-informed decisions that neither feed unnecessary anxiety nor ignore the reality of our social responsibility.

The following are suggestions for worship during this time:

- 1) Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Encourage others to do the same. Eucharistic ministers, both clergy and lay, should use hand sanitizer before distribution of Communion.
- 2) Refrain from handshakes at The Peace and all other times. Offer creative alternatives that convey the same sentiment for the occasion.
- 3) When celebrating the Holy Eucharist, continue with the traditional practice of Communion of Both Kinds, but *explicitly* offer the following information:
  - a. Receiving Communion of One Kind in the bread alone is always a valid option for a communicant.
  - b. As the *American Journal of Infection Control* (Vol. 26, No. 5, 1998) states, “no documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of the common communion cup.” Additionally, between the alcohol content in fortified wine, the antimicrobial properties of silver (use your silver, even if it is Lent), and proper technique in turning and wiping the chalice, there is very little probable threat of passing on infectious disease. Intinction is always less safe than drinking from the common cup, unless intinction is performed by Eucharistic ministers.
  - c. Remind the faithful that it is their choice to receive or refrain from receiving the cup of our Lord.
- 4) Morning Prayer is also an option for Sunday morning worship.

The Episcopal Church has created a helpful page ([episcopalchurch.org/concerning-covid19](https://episcopalchurch.org/concerning-covid19)) of resources for churches, dioceses, and communities. You may find this information helpful as you seek to make your own informed decisions.

Remember that our action and inaction in all areas of our common life, affects other people. Be smart. Stay calm. Continue with life and worship. Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Faithfully yours,

The Reverend Canon Caleb J. Lee  
President of the Standing Committee



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ARCHDEACON  
The Venerable Calhoun Walpole

## A Note from the Archdeacon:

As we absorb the reality that the coronavirus is now a full-fledged pandemic, we remember who and whose we are. Amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life, we can be assured of the sure and certain knowledge that we are the Lord's—in this life and in the age to come. No matter what, we are the Lord's—and our Lord Jesus knows each of us as his very own. He loves us as his own very Body, which we are.

Each year during Lent, we, like Jesus, are thrust into the wilderness—a place of uncertainty, disorientation, fear, and at times, even danger. We now find ourselves cast into a new kind of wilderness, that of our unsteady and confusing world. We can take great heart, though, as we give thanks for the precious gift of one another, and the opportunity to respond in love and with calm and clear-eyed faith in the One who loves us and gave himself for us. As Canon Caleb says: Be smart...Love the Lord, and love your neighbor.

Blessings to you,

The Venerable Calhoun Walpole  
Archdeacon, The Diocese of South Carolina