



The Rt. Rev. John E. Privett, *Bishop*

September 23, 2009

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write as we learn of the appearance of the first cases of H1N1 flu in British Columbia. There has been much coverage in the media and the level of concern has risen throughout the country. It is important to take precautions, but not to over react to the situation. Many people have asked me about how we should respond in our parishes. I would like to offer four suggestions:

First, as people of faith we must remain confident in God's faithful love for all people and trust in God's healing work in our world. I ask you to pray for those affected by the virus, and continue to be the kind of compassionate and caring congregations that I have experienced throughout the diocese.

Secondly, with respect to worship, I would ask that the practice of intinction be discouraged during flu season. It is far better for people to receive the wine directly from the cup, and if there is concern or illness in the congregation it is entirely appropriate for people to receive the bread only. Please encourage active hand-washing in our parishes. Some smaller congregations are making hand cleanser available in the pews. Nevertheless at the time of the passing of the peace it is also appropriate to refrain for several weeks from exchanging hugs or shaking hands and to speak the words of peace to another while making a simple bow to acknowledge our shared life in Christ.

Thirdly, if there are members of your congregation living alone it is helpful to encourage individuals to arrange for a friend or member of the parish to be in touch regularly to inquire after their well being.

Finally, let us model Christian concern and respect for one another. If another person declines to shake hands, or receive the cup, please honour that person's needs and decisions. There is room for a diversity of response as we each take responsibility for our own health and for the care of each other during this upcoming flu season.

May God bless you in your worship and in your witness to God's renewing life.

Faithfully,

+John

John E. Privett

P.S. Attached is a sample bulletin announcement that you might find helpful to use over the next few weeks.

Sample Bulletin Announcement for use during flu season:

During the fall flu season, our Bishop has asked that parishioners refrain from the practice of intinction (dipping the bread in the cup) when receiving communion. It is better to receive from the cup, but if you are not feeling well or concerned about the H1N1 virus it is best to receive bread only. It is a long standing tradition that to receive the bread alone is to receive the sacrament in its fullness. At the passing of the peace it is entirely appropriate not to embrace or shake hands as the exchange of the words of peace is a symbolic gesture signifying our deeper unity as the body of Christ.