

THE BISHOP OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

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COVID-19, CORONAVIRUS UPDATE #2

from The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Boyd

Bishop of the Diocese of The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands

To be shared in all Churches on Sunday, 15th March, 2020

My Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We continue to follow the Covid-19, Coronavirus developments with prayer and alertness.

We note that, at this point, 125 countries are affected. Of the 130,000 persons infected, 68,000 have recovered and 4700 have died. Coronavirus is something that a majority of persons recover from although some become very ill first.

More Caribbean countries are now recording cases. This is unavoidable given the level of international travel that is the norm.

We note the **UNPREDICTABILITY** and **UNQUANTIFIABILITY** of the virus. Many in the scientific community are saying that this is a new virus that we do not know much about. It has high virulence (aggressiveness) and that can potentiate serious diseases like cancer.

We note the discomfort that it causes, the fear and panic that exists in some places, and the hysteria that could erupt so easily.

This matter is **SERIOUS** and must be taken **SERIOUSLY**, and every precaution must be taken.

I issued a list of protocols last week. There have been many developments since then. The outbreak was first called an epidemic in china (widespread there with a lot of cases never before seen). The World Health Organisation (WHO) has now declared it to be a pandemic (worldwide, in most countries and communities). Bear in mind that it is in good stewardship and leadership to follow the abundance of professional and scientific advice given by the Public Health officials. Therefore I make the following update to existing **TEMPORARY** measures:

1. We suspend the use of the common cup immediately. The faithful are to receive Holy Communion in one kind, i.e., the Body only, in the hands. The Church's teaching is that the whole Christ is received whether one receives only the consecrated bread or both Body and Blood. The celebrant alone should drink from the cup.
2. Handshaking and hugging should cease for the time being, at the Greeting of Peace, or as you enter or leave the church, and at other times.

3. Holy water stoops should be emptied and not used until further notice. Place hand sanitizer there instead.
4. Baptism will no longer be done in common water in the font. Each individual will be baptized in separate water in the font, poured from a container over the candidate and into the font.
5. The Mothering Sunday Service and Procession will not take place. Each parish should have their own observance in house, in some form. Please try to make it as special and as youth-centered as possible.
6. Contact with the sick and the elderly must be carefully considered and in urgent or extreme cases only. Statistics have shown that these persons are the most vulnerable, and suffer as a result of healthy and stronger carriers of bringing the virus to them.
7. Stay away from unnecessary gatherings in crowds. Even the barbershop, beauty salon, nail tech or “under the tree” could be dangerous once someone is infected. The NBA has suspended its 2019-20 season, the NCAA has cancelled its tournaments, the status of the Summer Olympics is being questioned, Major League Baseball has cancelled the balance of Spring Training, the National Hockey League (NHL) has paused its current season, and this is affecting many other large sports gatherings.

The point is that large or small gatherings where people are packed closely together could pose a transmission threat.

We need to pay attention to all close quarters.

8. Cut out ALL unnecessary travel.
9. If you are coughing, sneezing, have a fever or shortness of breath, etc., stay at home and away from people. If you must go out, please stay at least six feet away from others.
10. Clergy, Chalice Bearers and Servers should ensure that they wash their hands before and after services and, should sanitize their hands BEFORE and AFTER the administration of Holy Communion. Limit the persons who are handling the Eucharistic vessels.
11. Practice frequent hand-washing and the use of hand sanitizers often (minimum 60% alcohol based sanitizers).
12. Try to keep dirty hands away from your face.
13. Everyone should seek to boost his/her immune system. Use multi-vitamins, vitamin C, and natural immune boosters like beta carotene, turmeric, ginger, cumin, etc.

14. Hand rails and altar rails should be cleaned before and after service. Bleach is the best agent for this. 70% alcohol is the next best thing.
15. Practice regular wiping down of public areas and communally used objects. (Bleach or 70% alcohol again).
16. If possible, place hand sanitizers at the entrances of all churches. Let ushers encourage persons to use them.

Conclusion

This situation calls for us to be sober and sensible. Decisive, appropriate action now will minimize or avoid greater catastrophe later. So let us take the lead. These precautions are important because, at the end of the day, we cannot say that the virus is not already here. We can only say that we know of no known or proven cases.

Let us pray

- Pray in faith – and never be faithless – knowing that God has power to remain active and effective in His Most Holy Sacrament. He will keep us from harm and danger, even as we take these necessary and temporary precautions. His grace is active helping us to exercise the wisdom of our best stewardship.
- Pray for those infected with Covid-19, Coronavirus all over the world, and for their families.
- Pray for those who live in fear because they do not feel adequately protected from it.
- Pray for caregivers and support professionals everywhere.
- Pray that all of us would be informed, sensible and prudent in our behavior with respect to this matter.
- **PRAY FOR HEALING, RESOLUTION AND THE RESUMPTION OF NORMALCY IN GOD’S TIME.**

Friday, 13th March, 2020

Here are some phone numbers that you should have for the Covid-19, Coronavirus Surveillance Unit. If you or someone you know feels unwell, or has any flu like symptoms, call, talk and get advice.

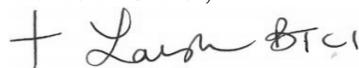
502-4790

502-4776

376-3533

376-4705

Yours in Christ,



The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Boyd

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