

THE BISHOP OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Zane Boyd, Sr.

ADDINGTON HOUSE
Sands Road
Telephone: (242) 322-3015, 6 or 7
Fax: (242) 322-4670 (Private)
(242) 322-7943 (General)



P. O. Box N-7107
Nassau, N.P., Bahamas
www.bahamas.anglican.org
Email: bishopboyd@bahamasanglican.org

A PASTORAL LETTER
FROM BISHOP LAISH BOYD
REGARDING THE CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC
To be Read in and Distributed in all Parishes in the Diocese on
Sunday, 8th March, 2020

My Sisters and Brothers,

All of us are watching with concern as the COVID -19, Coronavirus story unfolds. It is a global reality that we must all watch and pray about. It also calls for responsible talking and responsible action from all of us.

To date there have been 93,000 recorded cases in 81 countries around the world: 80,000 cases in China, 6,000 in South Korea, 3,500 in Iran and 3,000 in Italy, to name the top four countries.

In the USA, across 17 states, there are 162 cases recorded. In the Caribbean, one case each has been recorded in Dominican Republic, St. Barts and St. Martin.

In The Bahamas, there are no confirmed cases to date, thankfully. Twenty-eight persons have been quarantined because they had traveled to China recently or had been exposed to an infected person in some way. Twenty-six of those persons have been released and two remain in quarantine. The quarantine period is 14 days, to make sure that the detained person does not have the virus.

So far, worldwide, there have been 54,000 people who had been confirmed as infected and then they recovered.

3,000 persons have died from the virus so far.

As responsible Christians, let us be aware of what is happening on our planet. We have to admit that there are infections out there which spread quickly, especially since travel is a normal part of life worldwide.

WE MUST TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY and respond appropriately from an informed position, and without panic. As a church, let us be a part of smooth progress forward, even as we help to respond to the present challenge.

The Most Rev'd Howard Gregory, Archbishop of the West Indies, shared these words with us this week:

“... it is imperative that the Church be responsible in the context of this threat to our national health and function, in her worship and liturgical practice, in ways that promote healthy

hygiene and as a way of partnering with the national effort to minimize, if not eliminate, the prospect of..." [a larger crisis].

In the Diocese, please note the following which are TEMPORARY measures designed as a part of our responsible Christian stewardship:

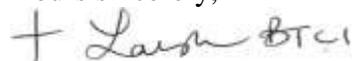
- (a) Intinction will be suspended until further notice. Such persons may receive in one kind i.e., the Body of Christ only. The Church's teaching is that the whole Christ is received whether one receives only the consecrated bread or both Body and Blood.
- (b) At this time, we will continue to use the common cup. Persons who are uncomfortable with this may receive in one kind, that is, the Body of Christ only.
- (c) Hand shaking and hugging during the Greeting of Peace may continue. If you are uncomfortable then bump fists, bump elbows or bow reverently.

Additionally, I wish to advise the following protocols:

1. Practice frequent hand washing and the use of hand sanitizers (minimum 60% alcohol based sanitizers).
2. Try to keep dirty hands away from your face.
3. When coughing or sneezing, please cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow, or use tissue and dispose of same immediately and wash your hands.
4. Avoid close contact with persons who are coughing, sneezing or display any symptoms of respiratory illness.
5. If you are coughing, sneezing, etc., then refrain from hugging or hand shaking at the Peace, and receive Communion in only one kind, that is, the Body of Christ, only, in your hand.
6. Everyone should seek to boost his/her immune system.
7. Clergy, Chalice Bearers and Servers should ensure that they wash their hands before and after services and, where possible, sanitize their hands before and after the administration of Holy Communion.
8. Hand rails and altar rails should be cleaned before and after service.
9. Those handling money should take extra sanitizing precautions.
10. If possible, place hand sanitizers at the entrances of all churches.
11. Holy water stoops should be emptied daily (the water being poured into the ground, as in our liturgical and devotional practice). In the blessing of holy water salt is always used. For the time being we will use a little more salt than usual to increase the curative properties of the water.

In the face of what could be frightening, worrying and disconcerting, let us remain positive and hopeful. Let us seek to be fully informed by reading and by keeping up with the news.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Boyd
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