

THE ARCHBISHOP OF THE WEST INDIES, PRIMATE AND METROPOLITAN,
AND THE BISHOP OF JAMAICA

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**TO: ALL CHURCH WORKERS HOLDING THE BISHOP'S LICENCE
CHURCH HOUSE STAFF**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for Clergy and Congregations

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

While the Ministry of Health continues to monitor the national situation in regard to the presence of coronavirus (COVID-19) and assures us that it is not present in Jamaica, it is clear that we need to be alert as citizens and engage in good hygienic practices as there is the likelihood that it will come our way at some time. Indeed, the Caribbean Public Health Agency, (CARPHA) Executive Director, Dr. Joy St John is urging health authorities of member states to shift their mind set from preparedness to readiness and rapid response and continue to do all that is necessary to strengthen their capacity to respond to possible importation of cases.

Healthy hygienic practices are being promoted by our local health authorities and Regional bodies. Accordingly, the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Dr Carissa F. Etienne, has warned that there are simple precautions that everyone can take to prevent respiratory illness, including COVID-19:

- "Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizing gel.
- "When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with your flexed elbow or with a tissue; dispose of the tissue immediately and wash your hands," PAHO urged.

Likewise CARPHA Executive Director, Dr. Joy St John, offers the following advice:

- "It is recommended that persons maintain basic hand and respiratory hygiene, and avoid close contact, when possible, with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing,"

While we do not want to be purveyors of panic, it is imperative that the church be responsible in the context of this threat to our national health and function in its 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 an epidemic in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

Consistent with positions being adopted across the Anglican Communion, I am directing that we immediately pursue and promote *best-hygiene practices* that include advising parishioners with coughs and sneezes to:

- refrain from handshaking during The Peace and,
- to receive Communion in one kind only.

Should the COVID- 19 virus be identified in Jamaica by the Health Authorities, it would be appropriate that the use of the Common Cup be suspended.

It is also best practice for churches to ensure that soap be available in all bathrooms and hand-sanitisers where possible.

In addition, priests presiding at the Eucharist, chalice bearers and servers should wash their hands, preferably with an alcohol-based (minimum 60%) hand-sanitiser.

Intinction is not recommended (even by celebrants or chalice bearers) as this represents an infection transmission route.

Best hygiene practice should continue to be observed in all pastoral contacts.

Yours in Christ!

++ *Howard Jamaica & Cayman Islands*

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