



Risk Management Tip Sheet

Coronavirus: Safety Tips for Religious Organizations

Overview

With the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) to the United States many religious organizations are asking what they can do to ensure the safety of their employees and congregations. You are encouraged to review the guidance provided by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization](#). In addition, here are some tips you may consider:

Prepare the Space for Church Members

- Clean hard surfaces with disposable wipes prior to any services or gatherings.
- Provide disposable wipes to community members, in case they wish to wipe down the area where they'll be seated.
- Supply congregants with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content) to use before entering the worship space and/or participating in Communion.

Minimize Contact Between Congregants

- There are many instances when church members might come in close contact with one another, such as passing the peace, taking the Eucharist, or holding hands during prayer.
- Discourage congregants from holding or shaking hands at any point during services. When passing the peace, church members should find alternatives for handshakes, such as elbow bumps, bowing, waving, or smiling.
- Everyone should sanitize their hands prior to participating in Communion.
- Clergy are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water before the Eucharist, if possible.
- Please view additional recommendations and liturgical resources related to drinking from the common cup and Communion [here](#).

Spread the Word, Not the Virus

- Offer prayers for the sick, and ask any ill congregants (and family members) to stay home from services and other gatherings—even if their symptoms do not match COVID-19 symptoms, which include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.
- If you or others you know develop COVID-19 symptoms, prompt medical attention is strongly recommended.
- Share that these precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Many behaviors are engrained in congregants and clergy alike, so offer reminders throughout services about changes to usual procedures, such as not holding hands.

As the Church and others continue to manage through this evolving situation, we remind you that being more cautious about person-to-person contact while COVID-19 is active will likely reduce the chances of its being spread throughout your church community.

We wish you all good health!

COVID-19 Resources

- Episcopal Relief & Development compiled helpful [information](#) from printed resources for church bulletins to liturgical resources.
- The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia offers a compilation of [COVID-19: Requirements, Recommendations, and Resources](#).
- The CDC provides [information](#) about symptoms, transmissions, and recommendations for prevention.
- The World Health Organization provides [updates](#) and information on the latest developments regarding COVID-19.
- View proper handwashing [techniques](#) from the CDC.