

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following document addresses the many questions that clergy in the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester have posed regarding nursing home visitations and Communion Under Special Circumstances during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It takes into consideration that residents of long-term care facilities and private homes for the elderly house residents who are among the most medically vulnerable populations while being the most in need of pastoral care during this pandemic. This document addresses a manner for communicating the Sacrament of Christ's Body exclusively. This is based on the understanding that communication of the Sacrament of Christ's Blood is not a practice in the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester during the COVID-19 Pandemic until further notice as determined by the bishop.

Additionally, it is prudent to continue a strict observance of safety protocols during and after the distribution of a vaccine for COVID-19 due to the unknown transmission during a period when full immunity has not been achieved in our communities. In an effort to address equity concerns, it is imperative that we follow these protocols, **including the procedure to receive COVID-19 testing and self-isolation as outlined in section 3.0**, until we can discern the population of a given area has full immunity. While we hope that all receiving communion are vaccinated, we acknowledge that some will not receive the vaccine; however the following protocols will allow all individuals, regardless of being a vaccine recipient, to have access to communion.

2.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES

Visitors should follow all the protocols of the care facility that they are visiting. The guidelines mentioned here are intended to augment those guidelines. Additionally, those individuals who are part of a nursing home staff where they are regularly tested may have different protocols.

The person administering the sacrament should:

- 2.1 receive COVID-19 testing and self-isolate as outlined in section 3.0
- 2.2 wear a mask and a face shield the entire time
- 2.3 wash hands at beginning of the visit
- 2.4 use hand sanitizer immediately prior to administering the sacrament and after
- 2.5 maintain a 6-foot distance except when administering the sacrament

- 2.6 The person receiving communion will cup their hands to receive the sacrament of Christ's Body only. The person administering the sacrament will place the bread in the recipient's hand without touching their hand.
- 2.7 The person receiving the sacrament will wear a mask and only remove it briefly to receive the sacrament after the person administering the sacrament has moved away from the recipient. Following this they will place their mask in place immediately.
- 2.8 The person who is visiting must be low risk according to indicators for COVID-19 symptoms as outlined by the CDC.
- 2.9 Visits should be conducted in as short a time as possible, preferably 15-20 minutes.

3.0 SELF ISOLATION GUIDELINES

Due to the vulnerability of the population in long term care facilities, a period of self-isolation is advisable. **Self-isolation is defined as follows: stay indoors as much as possible and avoid groups over 10 people; if in the presence of other individuals, social distance, wear a mask, and exercise frequent hand washing and sanitizing. Please note that this is not the recommendation of a full quarantine. Self-isolation is different than quarantine.**

- 3.1 take a COVID-19 test prior to visiting the long-term care facility within 72 hours of a person's visit; please be sure that your test results come back negative prior to your long-term care visit.
- 3.2 self-isolate as much as possible for 3 days prior to the COVID-19 test because it may take 3 days for the test to be positive if you have contracted the virus;
- 3.3 self-isolate following the COVID-19 test until the long-term care facility visit.

4.0 RESOURCES

The Task Force for Liturgy and Sacrament understands that self-isolation is a sacrifice for many. We view sacramental visits as a gift that we offer willingly as a mission on behalf of Jesus Christ for a population that struggles with a sense of loneliness and abandonment and in many cases are under quarantine-like conditions for their safety and the safety of others during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it is important to remember that a Eucharistic Visitor embodies the

faith community that sends them forth. Therefore the Body of Christ must express care and nurture for the individual bearing the sacrament to those who will be nurtured both spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially in this difficult time.

ADDITIONS TO COMMUNION UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Note that changes include additional scripture passages that may be read in addition to a Post Communion Prayer for use during the pandemic. It is hoped that these may be a resource to emphasize to the recipient of the sacrament that they are part of the larger Body of Christ, that they may experience the love of God during this time.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. *John 3:16*

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."
John 6:35

Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." *John 6:51, 55-56*

Jesus said, "Abide in me, as I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." *John 15:4-5a, 8-9*

And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'
Matthew 28:18-20

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8:38-39*

After the Reading, the Celebrant may comment on it briefly.

Suitable prayers may be offered, concluding with the following or some other Collect

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Confession of Sin may follow. The following or some other form is used

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

The Priest alone says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

A deacon using the preceding form substitutes "us" for "you" and "our" for "your."

The Peace may then be exchanged.

The Lord's Prayer is said, the Celebrant first saying

Let us pray in the words our Savior Christ has taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those

who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

or

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

The Celebrant may say the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God

and may add

Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

The Sacrament is administered with the following or other words

The Body (Blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life. [*Amen.*]

One of the usual post communion prayers is then said, or the following prayer adapted for Communion during a Pandemic:

Gracious Father, we give you praise and thanks for this Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, the pledge of our redemption; and we pray that it may bring us forgiveness of our sins, strength in our weakness, and the assurance that Jesus our redeemer is with us always; increase our faith with the knowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The service concludes with a blessing or with a dismissal

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.