

# From the Bishop

The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



March 12, 2020

## A Special Message from the Bishop

I have been asked how “A message from Presiding Bishop Curry related to worship changes during a public health emergency” (see <https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/publicaffairs/message-presiding-bishop-curry-related-worship-changes-during-public-health>) impacts us in Hawai'i. I shared the following teaching/announcement with all clergy on Tuesday, March 10:

*The Bishop has offered a further clarification, and, at this time (March 10, 2020), he affirms the rubric that states: “Opportunity is always to be given to every communicant to receive the consecrated Bread and Wine separately. But the Sacrament may be received in both kinds simultaneously, in a manner approved by the bishop” (bottom of BCP, p. 407). He has instructed that we not practice “auto-intinction” (when the communicant dips the bread into the wine themselves). At this time, he does not intend to again approve that means of administering the Sacrament for basic hygienic reasons. He has taught that it is part of our heritage that the Sacrament is offered to communicants in both bread and wine. He asks that we stop auto-intinction (communicants dipping the bread into the wine themselves) even after the current health crisis passes – no more fingers in the chalice ever. If a congregation does return to intinction in the future (after the current health concern), then it is preferable to be administered by the Eucharist Minister placing the host (after slightly dipping it into wine) onto the communicant’s tongue. Intinction should generally be exceptional. Ideally, folk will drink from the common chalice if healthy or just consume the bread without taking wine (if concerned or ill). At this time, the Bishop instructs the wine should be offered for a small sip from the common chalice, but not by intinction, and folk can decide themselves whether to drink the wine from the chalice or not. As Episcopalians, we accept the doctrine of “Concomitance”: This is the Eucharistic doctrine that affirms the simultaneous presence of Christ's body and blood in each of the eucharistic elements. We accept the truth that the fullness of communion is available by receiving either the consecrated bread or wine. If one is concerned about drinking from the common chalice, then one should just receive the bread. In this case, when the chalice is presented to the communicant, the Eucharistic Minister should pause in front of the person with crossed arms (designating not wishes to receive the wine), raise the chalice slightly and say the words of administration. The chalice should not be pushed toward the person and the Eucharistic Minister should not just walk on ignoring the communicant. The person should be acknowledged as noted and then the Eucharistic Minister can move on to the next communicant. So, in light of the current situation, a communicant may come forward to receive the Sacrament by (1) taking the consecrated bread, immediately consuming it and then taking a small sip of consecrated wine from the chalice, or (2) taking the consecrated bread, immediately consuming it and then crossing ones arms over the chest as the chalice is presented (not drinking from the chalice or dipping the bread into the wine). At this time and in light of current*

*health concerns, these are the two authorized options for receiving the Sacrament. The Bishop recommends that communicants just receive the consecrated Bread.*

As the Presiding Bishop informed the virtual House of Bishops this morning, he was offering his support for each Bishop to act as s/he think appropriate for her/his context and theological understanding. The Presiding Bishop is not making a recommendation about what to do regarding Holy Communion or closing churches. There may not be a single answer.

As for now, I hold to my message of March 10. I trust God's people to make healthy appropriate decisions for themselves. I hope all churches have altogether stopped the practice of intinction. I would prefer for hygienic and health reasons that we never return to the practice of "auto-intinction" (when the communicant dips the consecrated bread into the chalice with consecrated wine themselves). As of now, however, be clear that intinction is not allowed.

While I think the chalice can be offered, I think God's people can be encouraged to just receive the bread and to then forego the wine (as noted in my teaching above). I think clergy have to teach. We need to understand that if one desires to commune with the wine as well as the bread, then the normative practice is to take a small sip from a common chalice. If for health reasons or in extraordinary times (like now), one decides not to share the common chalice, then everyone needs to be assured that the Sacrament is full and complete in the bread alone. The key is teaching and trusting in God's people to understand – in their own language.

If someone doesn't appreciate the explanation or the change in practice, you may let me know since it is my decision as Bishop. This is an extraordinary time and, as Bishop, I encourage communicants to just receive the bread – not a ruling or a policy, but out of common sense. This teaching might need to be repeated for some weeks – even months – to come. I also want to remind everyone that at times "spiritual Communion" (not consuming the Sacrament, but present and aware of the Grace of God present) can suffice. The Eucharistic Ministers need to be given special training at this time – they too are "pastors" at the altar.

At this time, I don't see the need to move to Morning Prayer for public worship. Clergy have to be aware of their own health and what is best for them in the current context. Those with underlying health issues should reconsider celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday and giving out the Sacrament: too close to folk and too personal. If someone feels ill – including the Priest – they should stay home. Clergy need to prepare folk in the congregation for Morning Prayer led by a lay Worship Leader (or Eucharistic Minister in a pinch) in case the priest can't make it (A sermon from "Sermons that Work" can be read -- <https://episcopalchurch.org/sermons-that-work>).

I will only authorize the temporary closure of churches for public worship at the express request/instruction of civil authorities (State or County). I have been in touch with bishops with various opinions on this. As an island people, I think we must react in support of community decisions. As of now, we haven't had to engage this, but it may be an issue. So, I expect our churches to remain open and worshipping – until informed otherwise by me with instruction from the civil authorities. We must be supportive, however, of those who decide they cannot be with us in worship through our prayers and personal contact.

Our primary purpose as the Church is worship of God and nurturing the fellowship of believers. We must look to the possibility that worship and care will be done – at least for some – remotely for a time. We may come to the time that we will spend our time calling, skyping and zooming with one another for prayer, pastoral care and fellowship.

I am also concerned that we do not stop outreach ministries, service to others, and opening our spaces to outside groups (especially, AA, NA, etc.). This is going to require heightened awareness and nearly constant cleaning. I am also aware of the preschools on our properties and of the thrift shops. We have soup kitchens and food banks. We serve people in a variety of ways. Our churches will be needed all the more as families struggle, jobs are lost, and anxiety rises.

This all will require extra cleaning – either volunteer hours or added expense. It likely means thorough cleaning of a space after every use. That may impose limitations on what can be done. I am seeking more information on how our ministries can best be prepared to serve those in need at this difficult time. From Episcopal Relief and Development see resources at “FAITH-BASED RESPONSE TO EPIDEMICS” (<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program/faith-based-response-to-epidemics/>).

We are a small Diocese and can quickly get in touch with one another. I hope we are reaching out to one another on each of the Islands and in our communities. We – humanity – are in this interesting time together. I need to know the help you need! Keep in touch.

In preparation for the Lambeth Conference (yes, I am just assuming it will happen), I have been studying 1 Peter. I was rereading one of my favorite passages this morning (1 Peter 2:9-10):

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,  
God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him  
who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.  
Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God’s people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.*

We are God’s own people. All shall be well.

Our practices are changing and life can change at a moment’s notice, but God’s mercy abides. So, these are my thoughts, advice and direction at 11:30 AM, on Thursday, March 12, 2020.

I’m praying for you. Be sure to pray for me.

Yours faithfully,

+Bob

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick  
Bishop  
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai‘i