

The Anglican Church of Canada
Diocese of Athabasca

The Anglican Centre



From the Bishop:
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Dear People of Christ in Athabasca:

Jesus said: "Shalom I leave with you; my shalom I give to you; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage." (John 14:27). Shalom means more than what we think of as peace. Shalom means peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, wellness and tranquility. That is the state which Christ wishes us to live in.

How do we maintain Shalom when under physical attack, from something like the coronavirus COVID-19?

- A. Share your concerns with God and trust Him. "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46.1). Be continually in prayer.
- B. "Love yourself, as you love others." Take care of your health, eating right, exercising, etc. Insist on good hygiene, including thorough washing of hands: I have taken to washing until I have finished reciting the Lord's Prayer to myself, and recommend it as a good practice. Washing of hands is, I understand, THE single best preventer of disease transmission. Cough into your sleeve instead of your hands. If you do get sick, staying as isolated as you can is good advice generally (unless of course you need to see a doctor or go to the hospital). So, take care of your health, and stay informed through reliable sources (for example, Health Canada, or the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States). The advice specific to COVID-19 is to self-isolate for 14 days to make sure you do not have the disease. In Alberta, call 811 if you have any suspicions and get proper advice.
- C. "Love others, as you love yourself." Parishioners who have compromised immune systems or are at a greater risk during this outbreak may choose to self-isolate themselves. Reach out to those in need and strive to get them the help they need. Stay in touch with them. This is always our Gospel mandate, and part of living in Shalom.

Gathering to commune with Christ is essential to our being as Christians, so we shall continue this practice. Please follow these practices, at least while we are so concerned about infectious diseases:

- 1.) All parishioners and clergy thoroughly wash their hands before attending worship.
- 2.) Instead of passing the plate during the Offertory, place your tithes and offerings into a plate at the entrance, which can then be brought up to the Altar.
- 3.) During the peace, instead of shaking hands you can wave, smile, or bow. Please do, however, remember to pass the peace verbally! You are in effect praying for Christ's shalom to be part of the life of the recipient.
- 4.) When entering or leaving worship, greet each other verbally instead of shaking hands.
- 5.) Use hand sanitizer. Remember however, while these are excellent for bacteria, they do not get rid of all viruses – washing of hands is still required. Have hand sanitizer available to people as they come up for Communion.
- 6.) Wipe and revolve the chalice after each person has received the wine. Individuals can decide for themselves whether to use the common cup; it is more than acceptable to receive in 'one kind' (i.e.: bread) only, or to abstain altogether and receive a blessing. Ensure the next person is always having their portion of the cup wiped with a clean portion of the purificator, or get a new one.
- 7.) Do not intinct (dip the bread into the wine) – studies have shown this allows bacteria into the cup from the hands.
- 8.) Use only fortified altar wine, of at least 18% alcohol (for our Ecumenical Ministry sites, please confer with your respective authority (Lutheran or United) for their guidance regarding grape juice – individual cups may be used for grape juice (note this is for Ecumenical sites only)).
- 9.) Disinfect all door knobs, altar rails, pews and toys after each service. To disinfect plush toys, they must be laundered in a washing machine with hot water, and dried in a clothes dryer on a hot cycle – so you may just wish to remove them for the time being.

Take all necessary precautions and be mindful of your own health. If you feel ill, even on a Sunday morning, give notice to others and stay home. If you are responsible for leading the service in some way, pass your preparation (sermon, reading, or prayers) to someone who is not ill. If the clergy is ill then Morning Prayer is always an option.

God bless you greatly. You are in my prayers.

In Christ's Name



David Greenwood, Bishop