



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

315 East Pecan Street, San Antonio, TX 78205-1819

Dear People of St. Mark's,

Much has been reported about the Coronavirus, COVID-19, and we are taking steps at St. Mark's to do our part in following recommendations offered by the healthcare community. All signs suggest that this is a time for reasonable precaution. The City of San Antonio, Metro Health, and CDC have all commented on how best to protect our community and these practices are consistent with what we already know. Let us keep in mind also that influenza is a much more serious virus that can be mitigated by getting the flu shot.

These precautions are important not only for this current virus; they are excellent practices throughout the year.

1. If you are sick, stay home. Even if it is just a cold, stay home until you are no longer sniffly and contagious.
2. Keep your hands clean. We have hand sanitizer in the Narthex and a fresh stock of hand soap in every bathroom. When you wash your hands, do so for 20 seconds taking care to get between fingers and under fingernails.
3. Avoid touching your face.
4. Use tissues when you need to cough or sneeze. If tissues are not readily handy, use your elbow. Keep a tissue pack in convenient locations: purses, pockets, jackets.

Additionally, the church staff is stepping up cleaning and disinfecting throughout our property.

Those serving at the altar disinfect their hands before the distribution of Holy Communion. Steps are being taken in the nursery and children's classrooms as well. We have also received the following suggestions from the Diocese regarding our liturgical practices and encourage you to consider these modifications to our typical practices.

Passing of the Peace – If you feel uncomfortable shaking hands or embracing during the peace, please feel invited to share the peace of Christ with a wave, a smile, a bow, the peace sign, and other alternatives to a handshake or embrace.

Eucharist – You are encouraged to drink from the chalice during Eucharist, rather than intincting. Scientific studies have shown that when Eucharistic Ministers observe proper safeguards, including hand washing prior to administering the elements, wiping the interior and exterior of the chalice with a clean portion of the purificator, and turning the chalice in between communicants, drinking

from the common cup presents a much lower risk of spreading germs than intinction, which often results in fingers entering the wine or touching the interior of the chalice. If you prefer to forgo receiving the wine, please be assured that our theological understanding of communion has always considered that receiving the Sacrament "in one-kind" is a full Communion, and you may receive the bread then acknowledge the Cup by crossing your arms to indicate you would prefer not to receive.

According to Metro Health, the symptoms of novel coronavirus infection are fever (100.4F or more) and a dry cough; not a runny nose, typically. Over time, shortness of breath. Only people who are seriously ill are candidates for COVID-19 testing at this time.

There is likely to be rapidly changing information regarding this virus over time and we will be assessing our practices as new information is received. Please pray for all those who have been impacted by this virus, pray for health care workers who are caring for those who are ill, and all those who are seeking long term solutions and responses to this challenge. I believe that our common worship offers great solace in times of fear and concern. With some simple common sense efforts as a community, we can continue to worship with one another and receive the sustenance and nurture it offers us. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth C. Knowlton" followed by a small cross symbol.

The Rev. Elizabeth C. Knowlton