

I was ordained in 2011; in that time, I have communicated thousands of people and shaken thousands of hands in receiving lines. Beyond that - I've consumed what's left in the chalice after Holy Communion, quite literally drinking behind thousands of people over my ordained vocation. And I promise - I get sick at the same rate the rest of us do!

In a time of fear and panic, let us continue to dwell with one another, continue to be with one another, and continue to be at the Eucharistic feast with each other. I firmly believe Jesus would do the same.

Peace and blessings in your Lenten Journey,



David+

P.S. Some of you may know I was trained as a scientist before pursuing my ordained vocation. As such, my first instinct was to turn to peer reviewed literature - here are the two best sources out there. If you want to nerd out like me and get into the weeds, here they are. If you want a copy of the journal articles themselves, email me at [davids@stpaulswv.org](mailto:davids@stpaulswv.org), and I'd be happy to provide them to you.

- Letter to the Editor from CDC Scientists, "Risk of Infectious Disease Transmission from a Common Communion Cup" *American Journal of Infection Control* (Vol. 26, pgs. 538-539).
  - Key quotes: "no documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of a common communion cup" and "the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low"
- Peer-Reviewed Article, "The hazard of infection from the shared communion cup" *Journal of Infection* (1988) (Vol 16, pgs. 3-23).
  - Key quote: "No episode of disease attributable to the shared communion cup has ever been reported. Currently available data do not provide any support for suggesting that the practice of sharing a common communion cup should be abandoned because it might spread infection."



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## Holy Communion Practices while living during the time of the Coronavirus (as well as the season of cold and flu)

Some simple guidelines from your Interim Rector

Please do not to come to church or meetings if you feel ill

As your priest, I will continue to wash my hands with soap and water before services and use hand sanitizer before distributing communion.

Sharing of the Peace

- Waving is perfectly acceptable in place of shaking hands or hugging

During Communion

- You receive "full communion" in one kind such as only the host
- Use of the common cup with proper purificator procedure presents relatively low risk
- Intinction should be avoided

**The Rt. Rev. Robert Skirving, Bishop of East Carolina,  
offered these thoughts in a letter to the clergy of his diocese**

1. As our Book of Common Prayer directs, on page 407, "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." Note the word "always" in the first sentence and the word "may" in the second sentence. During this season of heightened concern, you are free to modify or eliminate the practice of intinction in your congregation, but

you are not free to withhold consecrated Wine. You may choose to remind your members that they are free to receive only the bread if that is their choice.

2. Please encourage your members to be on the watch for those who will be most seriously affected by the impact of the Coronavirus on our communities. If appropriate, initiate pastoral care strategies to care for those who may become isolated at home, those who face additional burdens related to childcare, or those who may find themselves without work/income or healthcare.
3. Remember and proclaim the words that Jesus so regularly spoke, "Be not afraid." As you institute precautions in the life of your congregation, try to avoid any language or actions that may exacerbate the fears that so many will naturally feel and be ready to offer extra care to those who are fearful.

**An excellent summary about communion practice from  
The Rev. David Sibley  
Rector, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Walla Walla, Washington**

Beloved at St. Paul's,

The news of the last week has been filled with turmoil created by the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19, roiling financial markets, causing increasing concern throughout the world about transmission, and otherwise raising concerns about the spread of infectious disease.

Invariably, the first question asked of the church in moments like this is:  
***What about the common cup at the Eucharist?***

The simple answer is this - peer reviewed studies and Centers for Disease Control guidance since the 1980s have consistently shown that "no documented transmission of any infectious disease has ever been traced to the use of a common communion cup" and "the risk for infectious disease transmission by a common communion cup is very low, and appropriate safeguards--that is, wiping the interior and exterior rim between communicants, use of care to rotate the cloth during use, and use of a clean cloth for each service - would further diminish this risk." *American Journal of Infection Control* (Vol. 26, No. 5, 1998). We do all these things at St. Paul's! Our Eucharistic Ministers are trained

to wipe the rim of the chalice between each communicant, to rotate the purificator (the cloth), and the Altar Guild ensures a clean cloth is used for each liturgy.

A common follow up question is:

***Is it more sanitary to intinct the host into the cup than drink from it?***

In short - absolutely not! As any experienced Eucharistic Minister or clergy person will tell you, it is a common occurrence when people intinct the host for their fingers to touch either the consecrated wine or the side of the chalice. This is in fact less sanitary than drinking in the first place - we can make sure our Eucharistic Ministers and clergy wash their hands, but we can't do the same for the whole of the congregation!

Invariably, though, I am still told:

**I understand the studies, but I'm still concerned - what should I do?**

As your priest, I can recommend three options to you:

1. *When in doubt, drink from the common cup* - it is the most sanitary way for you to receive the consecrated wine at the Eucharist. Christians have been doing so for centuries, and still manage to die at the same rate and pace as the general population!
2. *If you don't want to drink from the cup, don't intinct for yourself.* Instead, leave the host on your hand, and allow the Eucharistic Minister to intinct it for you, and place the host on your tongue. This ensures that only people with washed hands are handling the hosts, and it eliminates the unsanitary conditions that are caused by intinction.
3. *Finally, if you don't want to receive the cup at all, it's ok not to.* The church believes that all of the grace of the sacrament of the Eucharist is conferred wholly in each element - both consecrated bread and wine. To receive only the host is not to have a "half blessing" or to receive "half communion." Instead, receiving in one kind is to fully partake in the Eucharistic feast.

Finally, let your consideration for others carry the way you would through any other sickness: if you have a fever, stay home; if you have a cold, don't shake hands at the peace; and always, always, always wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds or longer.