

# St Andrew's Church and Swine Flu

The spread of swine flu is continuing to cause concern. Gatherings where many people are present (like church services and social events) are places where infection can be spread. At St Andrew's Church we are all committed to reducing the risk of infection spreading at church events.

**Personal Hygiene:** The swine flu virus is spread from human to human by droplets which come from the nose and mouth when a person sneezes. These droplets stick to surfaces and can remain infectious for some time. Individuals may be infectious without showing any symptoms. We can all reduce the risk of the virus spreading by paying attention to personal hygiene, such as frequent hand-washing and disposing of used tissues responsibly. Catch it, bin it, kill it!

**Risk Groups:** Most people who catch swine flu will recover without complications after about five days. Those in high risk groups (eg infants, pregnant women, persons suffering from diabetes mellitus or other conditions, elderly persons; people whose immune systems may already be weakened) should take special care to avoid the risk of being infected. Anyone feeling 'under the weather' has a responsibility to avoid gatherings or visiting vulnerable people, and should consider staying away from church services or events.

**Holy Communion:** Official Church of England advice states "In the event of pandemic flu affecting centres of population, the bishop of the diocese concerned should advise the clergy that communion should be administered in one kind only in that area (the priest alone receiving in both kinds) until the danger has passed." Until that point is reached it is not proposed to suspend the sharing of the common cup at St Andrew's.

One option which is commended by the bishops is for the presiding priest to intinct (dip) the bread in the wine and then place it on the hand of the person receiving communion. This option will be considered if flu becomes prevalent in Chippenham.

It is important that individual communicants do *not* intinct the bread themselves. While they may be protecting themselves from the risk of infection, they are increasing the risk of them passing on any infection they may carry.

Holy Communion in just one kind (that is, bread alone) is sacramentally valid, and is specifically permitted by section (8) of the Sacrament Act of 1547 when “necessity requires”. Anyone who is anxious about receiving wine either from the cup or by intinction should therefore receive the bread alone, and then leave the communion rail. If in doubt, please speak softly to the administering priest or lay minister.

**The Peace:** There is a risk of infection being passed person to person, and if flu is prevalent in the local community members of the congregation will be asked to refrain from a handshake. Until this point is reached, we will continue to shake hands as appropriate. However, if anyone would rather not shake hands their decision should be respected. A smile, nod, wave or other friendly gesture is entirely sufficient and appropriate.

**Hygiene:** It is important that individuals touching items which are then handed to others keep their hands clean, and as we do not have a public wash basin in the church a supply of alcohol gel hand-wash will be kept near the main door of the church.

Those administering bread at the Holy Communion should wash their hands at the vestry sink before the service starts (placing the paper towel they have used in the lined bin provided), and again at the Offertory. Alcohol gel will be available in the sanctuary. Servers, and those laying up before the service begins, should also wash their hands at the vestry sink beforehand. Volunteers serving coffee at church functions (including Coffee Shop and after church services) should also go into the vestry to wash their hands first.

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