



THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
OFFICE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA  
A Founding Member of the Province of the  
ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Week of Lent V  
April 1, 2020

Dear Reformed Episcopal Church:

Lenten greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior! Truly we're living in extraordinary times when we're having to take extraordinary measures to provide worship for the people of God! We have received such a huge, positive response to all our online services being offered across our church over the last two weeks. Thank you so much for your support and encouragement! The Lord has been good even in this challenging moment.

As you may know, however, the President as well as many of our state and local officials have extended the social distancing restrictions and stay at home orders until the end of April. These limitations, though there may be more flexibility in some geographic specific areas in the U.S. and Canada, reduce Church gatherings to ten people or less. For this reason, I asked in a previous letter that you consider a livestream service using the technology available. I requested that you be sensitive to our neighbors who want to see that the Church will care for others. At the same time the clergy with a few attendants should continue to offer worship in some kind of online venue using Morning Prayer or Holy Communion with a sermon. Even those clergy and lay readers leading in worship should observe extra hygiene precautions and social distancing. Please remember that a person may have contracted COVID-19, have no symptoms, but still be contagious. In this sense COVID-19 is unlike other flu viruses. This unique aspect to the Corona Virus in part explains the explosion of cases. Thank all of you who have heard my request and tried to comply.

Since the restrictions have been extended to the end of April by our national and local leaders, Holy Week and Easter services will be impacted. This is a time when ordinarily the service of Holy Communion is offered more frequently, at least on Maundy Thursday and Easter Day. Many of our churches have been using the excellent Morning Prayer service with a sermon. Some will continue to offer Morning and Evening Prayer during Holy Week. Many of our clergy, however, have expressed to me a desire to offer Holy Communion at this upcoming special time for Christians. In response to so many questions, I would like to share how many of our churches are making available and will be giving the Eucharist, while upholding the "no more than ten people" guideline.

One approach has been to offer multiple services at different times for ten or less people. In certain parts of the country it would be allowed, these services are being planned outdoors, particularly in the south where the weather has already turned warmer. Even if outside, however, restrictions concerning no more than ten probably still apply. Be sure and check with the local authorities.

Another approach is for people to sit in their cars, listen to a livestream service or on outdoor speakers where permissible, then drive up to the church to receive. Clergy come out and administer Holy

Communion. The clergy should remember to use hand sanitizer after each distribution/contact. It is also important to remember that people in their cars need to participate in the whole service by tuning into the service with the available technology. The ancient rubrics required that someone at least be present for the Gospel reading through the creed, sermon, prayers, confession/absolution, consecration and administration. This prevents a kind of “fast-food” approach to distributing the sacrament!

I’ve also heard from one of our parishes that the rector will be making available Holy Communion family-by-family after Easter. This parish is livestreaming an Easter service of Holy Communion with a sermon. It is allowing the families in the parish to schedule a time on Easter Monday and Tuesday to come by the parish to receive Holy Communion from the minister after confession of sin and absolution.

A final way for making the sacrament available is by means of pre-consecrated sacrament. Prior to the livestreamed service of Holy Communion, already consecrated sacrament in one kind (the Bread) is taken to the homes of parishioners in a container that has been set apart or blessed to carry the sacrament. During the service, when Holy Communion is administered by the presbyter and attendants, those viewing may at that time receive the sacrament that has been brought to them for that moment.

This approach operates on the principle of reserving sacrament for the sick who cannot come to the Church to receive. The Church throughout her entire history has always made Holy Communion available in this way. So has the Anglican part of the Church. The Reformed Episcopal Book of Common Prayer allows for this provision as well (p. 116 under General Rubrics). During a regular or special service of Holy Communion, the minister consecrates and sets aside extra sacrament to be taken to the sick and shut-in. After the service, the clergy and if needed, deaconesses, may take the sacrament to those who cannot come to the church.

Something similar to the same process is being utilized in the current pandemic. Although the people receiving pre-consecrated sacrament are not ill, they are providentially hindered from coming to the church for Holy Communion. In a sense, the entire land is a shut-in. The pre-consecrated sacrament may be taken to our members, so that they can participate to a greater extent in livestream Eucharists. They can not only see the Blessed Sacrament; they can receive it!

Special attention and instruction should be given in taking pre-consecrated sacrament to parishioners. The containers in which the consecrated sacrament is placed may vary. In some of our smaller parishes, the vessels being used for carrying the sacrament are small vial containers used by clergy called pyxes. Inexpensive pyxes may be purchased online. In other situations, such as Church of the Holy Communion where we have 400-500 communicants (230 families), we are utilizing plastic tubes that can be sanitized and set apart for the purpose of carrying the sacrament. I am providing an online link to a source for these tubes large enough to place pre-consecrated hosts in (<https://www.uline.com/Product/Detail/S-19524/Jars/Plastic-Vials-4-oz>).

Whatever the type of container for transporting and leaving with a family, the vessel has to be set apart/blessed for this purpose. There are special prayers of blessing that can be used or adapted to set apart the containers for carrying the sacrament (See, *The Manual for Priests*). Special sanitary precautions should be taken when placing consecrated sacrament in these containers, such as using extra hand sanitizer or even wearing rubber gloves. The vessels should be returned to minister/church, for proper use in the future. They may be kept in the sacristy for later use. Or, if not to be used again, they should be burned as is required for the proper destruction of perishable, consecrated garments or items and so forth (i.e. vis a vis flags).

Each family that receives pre-consecrated sacrament is asked to create a special, reverent location to place the vessel/tube. It could be near a cross in the house. It is strongly recommended that each household establish a family altar if it doesn't have one. This can be a small table or shelf with a cross and candles. One could also have a family Bible and prayer book on this altar, for Scripture reading and family prayer. After the livestream service(s) in which a person will be administering the sacrament to his family, he would want to put the vessel or tube back on the family altar until asked to return it to the church. If you would like to see the letter I sent to Church of the Communion Cathedral explaining in greater detail the process we're using, you may see our website or contact the parish.

Well, I began by using a phrase, "extraordinary measures for extraordinary times." In some ways we're having to do what we've never done. In other ways, we are offering what the Church always has. We're taking Holy Communion to those who cannot come to the Church, but who would like to receive it.

As a way of showing greater unity in a difficult time, on behalf of our Holy Communion Cathedral community I am inviting all our clergy and their parishes in the Diocese of Mid America to join our online services. The invitation is even extended to the entire Reformed Episcopal Church. Our services of Holy Communion will be on Maundy Thursday (7pm CDT) and Easter Day (9am CDT) via livestream. We will also offer a Good Friday service on the Seven Last Words with meditations, prayer and special music: Noon-3pm CDT. You may find the links on our website: [www.holycommuniondallas.org](http://www.holycommuniondallas.org). If instead a minister and parish offer their own livestreamed services, please know of my prayers for all of us as we approach this special time of worship for the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Finally, I am providing an attached link to an extraordinary interview of one of my former lecturers at Oxford, the Rt. Rev. Dr. N. T. Wright. Bishop Wright applies his rich knowledge of Scripture, theology and Church history to the present COVID-19 crisis. I know you will benefit immensely from it and hope it will be an encouragement to you. Should you have any questions or special needs during this time, don't hesitate to contact the bishops, clergy, and deaconesses in your dioceses. We are all here to serve Christ as best we can in this time of suffering and crisis. Thank you for your continued support and prayers! Please pray for me as your Presiding Bishop, and all of us among the clergy as we prepare to serve our church with Holy Week services. Whatever you do, may God richly bless your worship during Holy Week and Easter!

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Ray R. Sutton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Most Rev. Dr. Ray R. Sutton, Ph.D.  
Presiding Bishop

[https://allsaintschurchlynchburg.org/2020/03/29/nt-wright-interview-being-a-christian-during-coronavirus/?fbclid=IwAR2p\\_QAmtOxYqQ2nIm2feD1w8M8ZIYRGgu98GkRVAAG1HunlDm2Du3wU96M](https://allsaintschurchlynchburg.org/2020/03/29/nt-wright-interview-being-a-christian-during-coronavirus/?fbclid=IwAR2p_QAmtOxYqQ2nIm2feD1w8M8ZIYRGgu98GkRVAAG1HunlDm2Du3wU96M)

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