



Diocese of Huron



Diocese of Niagara



February 9, 2006

## **Letter to the Clergy and People of the Dioceses of Huron, Niagara and Toronto from the Bishops**

To Clergy, Wardens and Parishioners:

We write to you this day to advise you that a Tri-Diocesan task force has been struck to develop a protocol to be implemented in the event of an Influenza Pandemic. The Ministry of Health currently proposes what they consider to be a conservative estimate that a pandemic would affect 1.8 million Canadians (ill at home), require over 7,000 hospital beds and could result in as many as 3,000 deaths.

The Tri-Diocesan task force is planning to review such issues as pro-active methods of communicating infection control strategies including proper hand-washing techniques and dealing with droplet/airborne contagion; provision of ministry and support of our communities in the event of a pandemic; and pro-active and timely information dissemination to parishioners and to the greater public.

In this regard it would be helpful if you could begin to have conversations at Parish Councils to consider questions and issues that you would like put forward to the task force. You are also encouraged to begin, or to continue, stressing in your parish communities the importance of effective hand washing. "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States (CDC) echoes a common medical mantra when it says that, **'the most important thing that you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands.'**"

It should be noted that the findings of the SARS Working Group in Toronto determined that contagion through the common cup under normative conditions is a low risk health activity.

In the event of and dependent upon the severity of the Pandemic, our church will confront many challenges. We may, as a faith community, be faced with suspending the use of the common cup and the passing of Peace. Under such conditions, communion in one kind is not only theologically sufficient but essential as a reasonable response to potential health risks. In such conditions it

would be mandated together with other infection control methods. In even more severe conditions we may be directed to cancel worship and home visits.

We do understand that some Anglicans have already chosen to decline the chalice. We want to assure them that receiving in one kind (the Bread only) is theologically sound.

The threat of a pandemic is cause for concern and anxiety for many people. Yet it is important to realize that as a faith community we have met many challenges in the past which seemed at first insurmountable. Eric Beresford, past ethicist for the National Church, reminds us that the simple act of living involves embracing risk and uncertainty. He wrote;

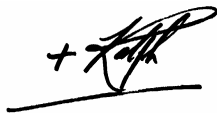
*"Eliminating all risk is impossible; human life is full of risks. Our witness of faith is one which embraces risk. Jesus risked his life loving God, teaching us that when we live as a community of faith, we can embrace fully the risk of living within our world. Our faith in God allows us to move forward with the understanding that while we as a community cannot escape risk, we possess those virtues required to face risk: wisdom, compassion, generosity, courage, love and faith."*

**If you would like more information or would like to provide suggestions or assistance, the Task Force members are:**

Toronto: The Rev. Douglas Graydon (1-800-668-8932)

Niagara: The Rev. David Long (1-905.527.1316, xt. 330)

Huron: Pat Pocock (chair), The Rev. Dalice Sim (Doctrine and Worship Committee), The Rev. Victor Krueger-Kischak (Occupational Health and Safety), Melanie Snyders (Human Resources), The Rev. Canon Janet Griffith Johnson (1-800-919-1115, ext. 224)

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a cross symbol to the left of the name. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.