



PEOPLE OF HOPE IN A TIME OF ANXIETY

Easter people rest in the resurrection; they spread good news. Pentecost people prepare, organize and serve.

We hear the words of warning about a flu epidemic. What we have to share with the world is a sense of calm and hope, even as we heed the message to prepare for the possibility of widespread illness. Bad news sells. Feelings of fear and anxiety are contagious. But hope and calm can also be spread.

HOPE



How do we cultivate and share hope and a sense of calm? First of all, take time to be still, to listen, pray and experience the presence of God. Talk with others in your community of faith.

Stay informed with *accurate* information. Limit your exposure to the “news,” and keep the information in perspective. Epidemics of flu occur frequently.

Heed the directives from public authorities, including:

- Keep yourself healthy: eat well, sleep adequately.
- Wash hands, cover coughs and sneezes, stay home if you don't feel well.

Obtain basic supplies and food needed for one to two weeks, including simple non perishable foods, medications, tissues, soap and household cleansers, bottled water.



Identify what ministries you can continue, even increase. Prayer chains can certainly continue, even if the partners

don't meet. Your congregation will need consistent financial support to pay regular bills. Will you as an individual see that this happens?



Identify opportunities for ministry. Think of those who are likely to be hard hit, especially those whom others might forget: those who live alone, those who are already without health care, working parents with young children. Ask how we can support those in health care, public service and related fields that are heavily stressed at this time.



Identify ways to adjust the way ministry is currently done. Make sure tissues, hand sanitizer, and waste baskets are available. Can you share the peace without shaking hands? Are different ways of serving communion needed at this time? If it is not wise to gather in large groups, how can you make sure that people, especially the most vulnerable, keep in touch? If we could not hold services for a number of weeks, how could we assist members to worship?

All of these ideas can quickly become overwhelming if we do not take the time to be still and know that God is God. Remember to work as a community. Easter people know what God can do with a few loaves and fishes. Pentecost people know that God's people care for the community that is near and the community that includes the whole world.

