



# From the Bishop

The Right Reverend Cathleen Chittenden Bascom  
Tenth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas

March 16, 2020

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God...  
If we love one another, God lives in us and that love is perfected. – 1 John 4:7,12*

Beloved members of the Diocese of Kansas:

Cases of the coronavirus have increased in our state, and public health officials now are clear that the wisest path forward is limited contact and cancellation of gatherings.

**Therefore, effective today, I firmly request that all worship services and gatherings in church buildings across the diocese be cancelled until April 3.** This also extends to outside groups like AA or other community partners. We urge them to seek more limited or virtual means of fulfilling their goals.

Before Palm Sunday, I will confer with diocesan leaders and others and be in touch again. The Bishop of Western Kansas, Mark Cowell, and I are of one mind that this is an act of love during Lent.

Please note that **members of the Topeka-based diocesan staff now are working from home** unless specific tasks require being in the office. All staff emails are on the website, <http://www.episcopal-ks.org/about/contact-us.php>, so please reach out by email as needed. If you would like a return phone call, please include your number so we can connect. We also will be meeting weekly by Zoom video to connect and organize our work.

Clergy who need to reach me have my cell number; please don't hesitate to call. **(785) 220-4450**

## **Parish life must remain robust**

The Way of Love that Jesus has left us is an adaptable and vigorous force. It has been a joy for me to witness how – after a Zoom conference last Thursday – our clergy and parish leaders have creatively responded to the prospect of molding the Christian love we share from our usual incarnate, communal practices, into new models.

Here are some of the approaches that have been shared with me. I hope they may inspire you, too.

## **List of diocesan livestreams**

- I want to **compile a list** of all the ways **the churches of this diocese are providing worship online**, either on Sundays or through the Daily Office. Please send an email to Melodie Woerman, [mwoerman@episcopal-ks.org](mailto:mwoerman@episcopal-ks.org) and indicate your church, what services you are providing, the platform you are using (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) and links (if possible). These will be posted on our

diocesan website on a new page of resources, <http://www.episcopal-ks.org/news/Coronavirus-resources.php>.

#### **Other livestreaming worship services**

- The Washington National Cathedral is livestreaming Sunday services at 10:15 a.m. <https://cathedral.org/>
- Trinity Wall Street in New York is streaming daily services at 11:05 a.m. Central; as well as Sunday services at 10:15 a.m. Central. <http://www.episcopal-ks.org/about/contact-us.php>

#### **Worship by conference call**

- St. David's, Topeka is doing worship via conference call during the week as well as on Sunday.

#### **Drive-through distribution of the Sacrament.**

- St. James', Wichita has arranged for parishioners to drive up to a part of the church and receive communion from Mother Dawn. I believe this approach imagines that these people have participated in the livestream Eucharist.

#### **Create a connection team**

- St. Thomas', Overland Park is forming a new Connecting Team to call and check on folks at home.
- St. Luke's, Shawnee has created a web of care they call "Vines and Branches." Each Vestry member has committed to a section of the parish membership and is setting up ways to email, call or text them throughout this period of social containment.
- St. John's and St. Bartholomew's in Wichita has sent a packet of informational materials to members of those congregations who now share a building.

#### **Diocesan life**

Our corporate life as a diocese must go on as well, just in new ways.

### **Council of Trustees**

- The **Executive Committee** and the full **Council of Trustees** will meet this week by Zoom. Our continued approach to COVID-19 will be central to our deliberations.

### **Council of Deans and Minster Shepherds**

- I will be meeting electronically twice in upcoming weeks with the Council of Deans and the archdeacons to ensure care for our parishes and people, as well as of the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry. I hope to set up similar meetings with the shepherds of our 12 minsters soon.

### **Staying in touch**

- I plan to compose a message each week to go out to our people, both in print and video. I also imagine an opportunity to write letters to those I love or serve – an ancient practice too long ignored!

### **Gardening and walking**

- Time outdoors. Even doctors agree that time outdoors, with social distance from other humans, may be a good option for this time.

### **What about financial giving?**

- We must find gentle ways to remind people that the needs of our churches go on, even people are not in church to pay their pledge. This may be a good time to investigate online giving, through venues like PayPal or other platforms.
- This week the Council of Trustees will discuss the financial realities resulting from this virus. We will retain a “loaves and fishes” mentality.

We find ourselves in challenging times, but we are people guided by faith. May God’s light surround us all as we make our way, together.

Every blessing,

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Tenth Bishop, the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas