



Media Release

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Word to the Church: Holy Week and Easter Day 2020 Online worship supported and encouraged

March 17, 2020

A word to the Church regarding Holy Week and Easter Day from the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church:

Dear People of God,

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

These affirmations are at the very heart of our faith as followers of Jesus Christ.

In public services of Holy Week and Easter we solemnly contemplate, commemorate, and rededicate our lives as witnesses to life made possible in the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Together with Christmas, Holy Week and Easter are the holiest of days in our life together in Christ.

Last week I stated publicly my support for bishops who, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, decide “for a designated period of time . . . to cancel in-person gatherings for public worship.” **I write now concerning the need to suspend in-person gatherings for public worship, in most contexts, during the sacred time of Holy Week and Easter Day.** Because this is a global health crisis, the principles in this letter apply throughout The Episcopal Church, including beyond the United States.

On March 15th the Centers for Disease Control recommended the suspension of public gatherings in the U.S. of more than 50 people for the next 8 weeks. On March 16th officials of the federal government asked persons in the U.S. to “avoid gatherings of more than 10 people” for the next 15 days. It is reasonable to assume that some form of recommendations restricting public gatherings will continue for some time.

Considering this changing landscape, I believe that suspension of in-person public worship is generally the most prudent course of action at this time, even during Holy Week and on Easter Day. I am also mindful that local situations vary. Bishops must make this determination and the duration of said suspension in their respective dioceses, based on the public health situation in their context and the recommendations or requirements of government agencies and officials.

It is important to emphasize that suspension of in-person gatherings is not a suspension of worship. I very much encourage and support online worship.

In the Gospels, the teachings of Jesus about the way of love cluster during Holy Week and Easter (see John 13-17, Matthew 22:34-40). The primacy of love in the Gospels is given its fullest expression in the shadow of the cross. This way of unselfish, sacrificial love, the way of the cross, *is* the way of God and the way of life.

It is out of this love for our fellow humans, our neighbors, that we forego the blessing of being physically together for worship. In so doing we seek to promote health and healing needed at this time.

God bless you and keep the faith,

+Michael

The Most Reverend Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church