



Diocese of Utah

**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

75 South 200 East

Salt Lake City, UT 84111

March 15 2020

Dear People of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah:

The Covid-19 virus is spreading, and all indications point to it continuing to do so. As the bishop of the Diocese of Utah it is incumbent upon me to be concerned about the welfare of the people of our diocese, and by extension, to all the people who reside in the diocese whether they be Episcopalians or not.

Governor Gary Herbert has issued recommendations to the people of Utah. They are:

- "Limit mass gatherings to less than 100, including church meetings, concerts, and conferences. This does not apply to schools or businesses.
- Those over the age of 60 and those with compromised immune systems should avoid gatherings of more than 20 people.
- If you are sick, stay home. If you can work from home, do so.
- Local health departments are in charge of the assessments of local schools."

Governor Herbert cannot order churches to suspend worship services. However, he is acting responsibly as the governor, looking out for the people of Utah.

As the bishop of the diocese I have been praying, consulting with clergy and staff, and with other bishops of The Episcopal Church regarding actions in response to Covid-19.

As I wrote in an earlier post, at a time like this, I need Jesus to help me. And I find Jesus most present in the hearts of the people of our diocese. So, my desire to is continue being with you and having you gather together for worship, fellowship and support during this difficult time. Nevertheless, I cannot in good conscience continue doing something that might be a risk to you good people. Especially for those most vulnerable, that is people who are over sixty or who have underlying medical conditions that make one vulnerable to illness.

Therefore, as the bishop and chief pastor of the Diocese of Utah, I am supporting Governor Herbert's recommendations. I have asked that our congregations suspend worship services for a two-week period beginning on Monday, March 16. And, if possible, to suspend services this Sunday as well. This means that the next Sunday worship will be on Palm Sunday, April 5. As my brother bishop, The Rt. Rev. Mark Van Koevering of the Diocese of Lexington wrote in response to the governor of Kentucky requesting churches to suspend services for the time being: "I am loathe to cancel services, but I do support the Governor's recommendation and think that I must humbly ask our faith communities to practice a Lenten fast of public worship... as a sign of love for one's neighbor especially the most vulnerable."

Finally, this morning, because I have developed a dry cough, I was tested for Covid-19. I have been ordered to self-quarantine for two weeks. I am not fearful of whether or not I might have it. I am in good health. I am following the doctor's order because it is the responsible thing to do. The self-quarantine stands regardless of what the test results indicate.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott B. Hayashi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi