



MARCH 2, 2021

The Episcopal Diocese of Utah

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi

Dear Siblings in Christ:

You have been heroic as we have lived this challenging year of the pandemic. I thank you for your sacrifices to help mitigate the spread of the virus. I thank you for the care, kindness, support and prayers you have given me, your families and friends, your neighbors, those whose names you don't know. Indeed, it has been trying. We have lost over a half million of our American family so far and we know sadly, there will be more.

We are, however, seeing a brighter future. We see this in the advent and distribution of vaccines to battle this dread virus and the continuing efforts to minimize the risk of catching and spreading the virus. We are still months away of returning to close to what was our normal life before the pandemic. The scientists and medical officials now report the infection rate has fallen below one-percent in all the Utah and Arizona counties where we have congregations. The officials and scientists caution us that Utah is still at risk of larger outbreaks.

I have closely followed the science and examined the best protective practices to mitigate its spread in the immediate future. I am following the advice of the CDC and leading medical authorities that clearly mandates we cannot safely resume worshipping with people sitting closely together while not wearing masks, or showing signs of sickness. However, after much prayer and reflection, **I believe that we can resume in-person worship services following COVID-19 safety protocols.** They are similar to the protocols I issued last spring when the virus rates rose to critical and deadly peaks.

- Worship attendance limited to the number of households your worship space can accommodate maintaining a six foot distance from others. Doors and windows should be open, weather permitting.
- Signs will be prominently displayed that people who are manifesting COVID-19. Symptoms should not enter the building.
- Hand sanitizer at entrance and in pews, used upon arrival
- Bulletins available on separate stand, perhaps with the Offering Plate (which will not be circulated or presented).
- Continued virtual Morning Prayer and other offerings.
- Practice health safety protocols — wearing masks, physical distancing.
- Sanitary masks will be worn by all persons when inside our buildings for worship or community/small group events.
- Strive to keep services no longer than 60 minutes.
- No congregational / choir singing.
- No physical Passing of the Peace.
- If Eucharist is to be celebrated, hygienic plans for distribution must be carefully thought through — the use of the Common Cup is prohibited.
- No physical greeting of clergy or fellow worshippers when the service concludes.
- No coffee hour or receptions following the service.
- A list of attendees shall be kept for the purpose of contact tracing should the need arise.
- When weather permits, outdoor services shall follow all of the above protocols.
- Outside groups that use the building will be required to follow physical distancing and health and safety protocols.
- Clergy in charge and vestries/bishop's committees are permitted to implement stricter measures.
- In the event that the virus spikes and hospitals become threatened of being overwhelmed in a congregation's locality then returning to no in-person shall become necessary.

The safest way forward for all of us is to continue to be vigilant in maintaining safe practices, especially in light of the threat of C-19 variants that are more contagious and may be more deadly, and very importantly, to get vaccinated when you are eligible. To this end, I urge all congregations to undertake efforts to encourage and assist people in getting an appointment to be vaccinated when they are eligible. This includes helping those without access to a computer, smartphone or tablet to make an appointment.

Please do all that you can to stay safe and encourage others to do the same.

Faithfully,

+Scott B. Hayashi
Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Utah