



MARCH 27, 2020

The Episcopal Diocese of Utah

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We have all been affected by the ongoing spread of COVID-19 (C-19). Because things are developing at a very rapid pace, it is difficult to make any definite statements about when we will resume what we call normal. We are living in a 'new' world.

In the midst of this new time, I am proud and happy to tell you that the clergy of our diocese have been faithful and hard working. They have been faithful to their call to serve God and to make God's love known in word and in deed. They have been learning new ways of connecting people together to bring spiritual hope and vitality to our people and the larger community throughout the week. They have been assisted by many laypeople of our congregations who have selflessly given their talents to this important and holy work. We have always said that church is more than just Sundays. With their labor, they have been making that statement a lived reality for many people. Thank you to them and thank you to all of you for your endurance, generosity and support of them, to me and to one another. During this time, **God is indeed doing a new thing and it is easy to discern it in the work and witness of all of you, the people and clergy of The Episcopal Diocese of Utah.**

The purpose of this pastoral letter is to communicate to you what I have discerned as **the road ahead**. The time frame of this is based on Governor Gary Herbert's, "Utah Leads Together, Utah's plan for a health and economic recovery. (The plan has been attached to this letter.)

At present and until May 1, public worship services will remain suspended. In place of these services, our congregations are offering an abundance of online worship services. They have also streamed and emailed a host of other opportunities for spiritual reflection and prayer.

After May 1 (or later depending on the status of C-19, and when public schools are open again) in-person worship will be offered. However, we expect that medical experts will ask that we continue to physically (socially) distance ourselves and keep our groups to ten or fewer persons. This will require that a system of scheduling and signing up for the worship services. Because of the smaller size of the services, the schedule for services will no doubt extend beyond Sundays. *The rector or vicar will determine the best schedule of worship for his or her congregation.* The reason for these protocols is that while we may, by the month of May, have slowed the spread of C-19, it will not be eradicated, nor will there be a vaccine available. The risk of spreading the virus, therefore will remain present with us. Holy Communion will be celebrated but the Common Cup will not be used. However, the option to have a common chalice will be given as long as that chalice is a pouring chalice from which the wine may be poured into individual vessels for each person.

When will we be able to resume life as 'normal'? No one can really say, I hope that it will be sooner rather than later. But, as Anthony Fauci has said, "...you don't make the timeline, the virus makes the timeline. You've got to respond, in what you see happen." *Please note that what I have written here may be revised in response to what develops with C-19 in the diocese.*

For the congregations that receive diocesan grants, **those funds will continue to be distributed without interruption.** And to all people, regardless of whether your congregation receives financial assistance or not, **please continue faithfully in your pledge!** Though the in-person worship and events have been suspended for this time, we must continue to support the clergy and staff (as well as the ministries that support those in need such as food banks and meal programs). They have been working many long and hard hours to keep us all connected together with one another and God. We must also remember those members who may have lost their jobs, had their hours reduced or whose business has been seriously diminished. The discretionary accounts of the clergy may be called upon more than ever before to give assistance.

The Easter story tells us that it was experienced first by a few women and then by the disciples who shared it with others. There were no buildings filled with people joyfully singing Easter hymns and celebrating together the Holy Eucharist. In the quiet of that first Easter, the hearts of the women and disciples were filled with wonder and amazement of the new thing that God had done in resurrecting Jesus from the dead.

As a celebration and witness to the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus, I ask that we join together with our brothers and sisters of other dioceses who will be proclaiming our common faith through the ringing of bells. On April 12th, at 10:00 a.m., I ask that every church that has a bell to ring it for five minutes in solidarity and joy as Christians united in one Lord, one faith and one baptism. In your own home, apartment or condominium join in and ring a bell or otherwise make a joyful noise. Let the whole diocese and the communities in which we are located, hear the sound of joy and celebration of our proclamation of our risen Lord.

We will continue to travel together through this time. Care for one another, pray without ceasing. Call, text and email one another. Check on those who are shut in or lonely. You remain steadfast in my heart and prayers.

Faithfully,

+Scott B. Hayashi

[Link to the Governor's Health and Economic Recovery Plan](#)