



March 25, 2020 | COVID-19 Response #6 | Suspension of public worship extended +

Hello sisters and brothers in Delaware,

I pray you and those you love are well. We are all learning to live in a very different world, and I imagine this is difficult for you, as it is for me. I have been surprised how challenging working from home has been this first week, but I'm making progress, learning new skills, and taking deep breaths regularly. Being at home with my family, including Ruby our hound dog and Pepper the minimally-social cat, has been the fun part. Learning to live in a world turned upside down is not fun at all. I was grateful that we sang *Amazing Grace* in our livestream worship last Sunday. That old hymn reminded again of the raw power of God's love to transform us and this world.

I again call upon us all to fully follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for public health, and our governor's state of emergency (SOE) declarations and modifications. They are widely publicized and widely available – including at our own COVID response page at delaware.church. Good public health is our best offense and defense against a pandemic. Our actions and our decisions matter.

Here are some of the top priorities this week. These are in addition to (or updates to) those I listed last week.

Area #1: Support and guidance for parishes

Parishes and clergy are advised of the following, in alignment with SOE and CDC. ('Parishes' can be understood to mean any diocesan organization.)

1. The current SOE mandates sheltering in our places of residence and forbids travel beyond our homes with limited exceptions, such as travel for groceries or medicines and for workers employed by 'essential' businesses or organizations. As a church, we are considered an essential organization, and we are thus allowed to remain open to conduct 'minimum basic operations.' We are required to accomplish as much work as possible from home.
2. Effective immediately, **our current suspension of public worship is extended through Friday, May 15, 2020**, the same date specified in the SOE. This also applies to Memorial House, which is closed as well. All groups that have experienced COVID-related cancellations have been refunded their deposits.
3. The leadership of Camp Arrowhead and I are closely reviewing the summer camp schedule in light of the pandemic. No decisions have yet been made. On-site tours for prospective campers or other users have been canceled.
4. The anti-racism training sessions for late April and early May have been postponed, likely to September or October, depending on the trainer's availability. More details will be published when they become available.

5. As announced last week, I have asked all parishes to divide their membership into 'virtual' groups of eight (group sizes may vary). These groups are asked simply to look after each other via phone, email, or other means. I have already heard stories of folks getting connected this way, and I delight in the openness and creativity you are bringing to caring for your neighbors.
6. I remind us that clergy are expected to restrict in-person pastoral visits to only emergency or end-of-life situations, and only then with the prior knowledge of the patient or family.
7. Last week, the trustees of the diocese offered an encouraging word about the health of diocesan investments. Parishes invested through the trustees are reassured that the quarterly distributions they rely upon will be met, on time, with full confidence.

Area #2: Support for clergy and spouses

The three teams I convened last week to expand our existing support for clergy and families are underway, and I am pleased with their work.

Area #3: Liturgical Items

1. As noted above, the suspension of public worship is extended through May 15. This will include Holy Week and Easter. Many parishes are offering online services every Sunday morning and I will offer one as well from the chapel at St. Albans Center. You can find the times and links for these services posted at [delaware.church's COVID response page](http://delaware.church's_COVID_response_page).
2. For Holy Week and Easter, I encourage you to worship online with parishes close to you. To that end, I will **not** offer Holy Week services from St. Albans Center. I encourage clergy and parishioners whose parishes are not offering livestream worship for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, or Holy Saturday to worship with one or more parishes close-by that do have online options. (These options will be posted at [delaware.church's COVID response page](http://delaware.church's_COVID_response_page) under 'Online Worship Services' before Palm Sunday.) I will offer morning prayer from St. Albans Center on Easter Day via Facebook Live.

We are all finding ways to help cope with the demands of sheltering in place. Deacon Dottie Vuono, who is currently serving at St. Mary's Church in Bridgeville, told me about a parishioner who has taken to praying Psalm 91 every day. The parishioner says, "Thank God for Psalm 91 in times like these." Amen to that.

With the love, hope, and mercy of Christ Jesus,

+Kevin

