



# The Episcopal Church in Delaware

The Rt. Rev. Kevin S. Brown, Bishop

*all things in love*

*1 Cor. 16:14*

**April 29, 2020** | COVID-19 Response #10 | When Will Churches Reopen?

Hello beloved of God in Delaware,

As always, I pray you are well and that you are doing everything in your power to stay safe. As I often remind us, the choices we make impact not only ourselves but our whole community.

Many folks are asking, "When will the churches reopen?" We in the Episcopal Church in Delaware have been actively working on this question. It may be a simple one to ask, but the answer is surprisingly complex. Returning to public worship and mission, which is what most folks mean by reopening, involves a host of important considerations and complications.

Think of what typical gatherings look like in your church. By our very nature and calling, it means bringing people into meaningful contact with God *and each other*. We hug, chat, shake hands, and exchange the Peace with dozens of people on a Sunday. We share lecterns and coffee pots and hymnals and bread and wine. We exchange bulletins and name tags and visitor cards and offering plates. We sing and pray aloud in close proximity, and we stand shoulder-to-shoulder at the altar rail. In short, we are used to coming to church expressly NOT to be apart from one another!

No one wants or expects this level of closeness and interaction with our fellow diners in a restaurant or shoppers at the pharmacy. We essentially dine and shop in isolation even outside of pandemic, with little to no expectation of hugging, singing, or touching other people, tables, or shopping carts. (That would be a memorable trip to Walgreens, that's for sure.)

Of course, this does not mean that safely restarting worship is impossible, only that it is not the same as reopening businesses. Do not be surprised if the shops and diners in your neighborhood reopen earlier than your parish church.

We will resume public worship, I have no doubt, but I do not foresee rushing heedlessly to do so. We will move wisely and with energy and purpose. It almost certainly will occur in phases. In the meantime, we will continue to expand and improve our online worship options and stay in loving contact with each other as we've been doing for weeks. There is no need to cut back on the innovative ways you are connecting with each other. Keep it up! In crisis or not, expressing our joyful love for each other and ourselves is the essence of who we are and what we do.

Your brother in Christ,

+ Kevin

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