



# The Episcopal Church in Delaware

The Rt. Rev. Kevin S. Brown, Bishop

*all things in love*

*1 Cor. 16:14*

## April 15, 2020 | COVID-19 Response #9 | Continued Support & Guidance for Parishes

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. **The choices we make impact not only ourselves but our whole community.**

We have just experienced what may well be the most unusual Easter any of us will ever know. Two months ago, it would have been utterly incomprehensible for me to have thought we'd be livestreaming Easter services from empty churches to eager worshippers ... but that's exactly what we did! The celebration of the Resurrection couldn't be stopped! I had the opportunity to view many of our parishes' Holy Week and Easter offerings on Sunday, and I remain so very proud of the work and care that we put into these services.

Now that Easter has passed, I remind us that this level of liturgical activity has always been the exception and not the norm. Because life in pandemic has been so strange we could easily mistake our super-charged Holy Week and Easter efforts as being part of the 'new normal'. That is not the case. Let us, my brothers and sisters in Christ, allow ourselves our customary post-Easter rest. Let us breathe, deeply, of the glad air of new life and hope of renewal. The world churns madly about us. May our moments of rest empower us to be bearers of peace, compassion, thoughtfulness, and joy.

Here are the highlights for this week.

**Area #1: Support and guidance for parishes.** The newly formed Joint Team for Parish Financial Support, which I announced just two weeks ago on April 1, has met its ambitious Easter deadline. They were asked to create a 'trusting and graceful' process for how parishes can receive the long-term financial help that soon may be needed. Both Diocesan Council and Trustees convened in special meetings earlier this week to review the joint team's proposal, and both groups offered their enthusiastic support.

The joint team is sending a letter today to clergy, senior wardens, and parish treasurers outlining the simple process to request financial assistance. It is not known how many parishes will eventually choose to seek help, but it is good for all parishes to know that help is available.

The joint team is also asking every parish to supply, before April 30, basic financial data from January, February, and March. This snapshot will help us understand our collective financial health — an essential bit of data to help us anticipate any further steps Diocesan Council and Trustees might need to take should the state of emergency remain in force for a much longer period.

**Area #2: Support for clergy and spouses.** I convened teams in March to expand our existing support for clergy (active and retired) and their families. Work is progressing well. I continue to include this to (1) emphasize the importance of our clergy and their families, especially at this time, (2) highlight the remarkable work they are doing under extraordinary circumstances, and (3) remind us all to reach out to them and say 'thank you' regularly.

**Area #3: Liturgical Items.** Public worship remains suspended in the Episcopal Church in Delaware at least through May 15. This means *any* public worship, inside a church or out in a park, that encourages people to leave their homes to gather, even if they remain 6' apart. I have instructed clergy to offer online Sunday worship **with as few participants as possible** – again, to not encourage people, including well-meaning volunteers, to leave their homes. Remember, the CDC has set 10 as a *maximum* threshold, not a target to hit. The fewer the better. I urge worship teams of up to four persons: one as officiant or celebrant, another for reading lessons and prayers, a musician or singer, and a videographer.

I close with a happy note, remembering the town hall I hosted last Thursday. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and from the feedback we received afterwards it is clear the participants did as well. It encourages me to offer one again in the weeks to come.

Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

+ Kevin

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