



## April 8, 2020 | COVID-19 Response #8 | Financial Support for all 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. It is good for you and good for our whole society. I offer a special 'thank you' to all workers who are called, for the common good, to work outside the safety of your homes. You keep our hospitals and care facilities working, you keep the streets clean and neighborhoods safe, you help ensure that the underlying structure of society stays intact. Thank you, thank you, thank you. For all of us, may we stay calm, stay safe, and keep looking out for one another.

Here's a quick update of news in the Episcopal Church in Delaware (ECD) this week. As of this writing, the governor's state of emergency (SoE) has been modified ten times, most recently this past Monday. As from the start, we strive to follow the directives from the SoE as well as guidance on personal hygiene and public safety from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

**Area #1: Support and guidance for parishes.** By strengthening our parishes and their people and ministries, we most directly help sustain the communities in which we live.

1. Recognizing that the SoE restrictions to combat the spread of the coronavirus have also caused negative impacts on many people's livelihood, the trustees of the ECD have moved to quickly make financial resources available to parishes to help people in need. The trustees' statement reads:

*"As part of the plan of the Joint Leadership Team for Parish Financial Support, and recognizing the vital importance of a parish discretionary fund, the trustees have unanimously and eagerly agreed to offer each parish a \$2,000 gift in support of each rector's discretionary fund ministry. The trustees hope that this gift will help meet the immediate needs of our brothers and sisters suffering during this pandemic crisis inside the church and beyond.*

*"As this offer is made with the simple grace of a gift given, there is no need for documentation or application, just call Judi Gregory or Judy Barnes in the Mission Support Office and a check will be sent to your parish. The bishop will work with the wardens of parishes where no rector, priest-in-charge, or interim rector is currently assigned, ensuring that the funds will be deployed to these churches. "This gift honors the wise stewardship of generations of our predecessor trustees and bishops who carefully shepherded the resources available to them. It is made in acknowledgment of God's grace in the life of our diocese and trusting that it will touch many lives with God's loving grace for us all. This gift comes as the season of Easter unfolds when we celebrate, yet again, our hope in the Resurrection."*

2. **I repeat what I wrote last week: financial help for our parishes is already coming.** I urge parishes, in the strongest terms, to not make immediate decisions around payroll, especially layoffs, at this moment. There is help on the way. The Episcopal Church in Delaware is committed to helping sustain the people doing faithful work for our parishes – the very folks

who help keep our parishes strong and active throughout this crisis. To this end, diocesan leaders and I have been working extensively to help parishes navigate the choppy financial waters caused by COVID-19.

- a. First, recognizing that cash flow is becoming a serious immediate concern, Diocesan Council authorized *every parish* to receive the **immediate deferral, up to three months, of monthly acceptance payments**. No formal application is required; a parish's rector, warden, or treasurer need only to inform the Mission Support Office that the parish wishes to defer payments.
  - b. Second, recognizing that longer-term financial needs and assistance will vary by parish, Diocesan Council also formed a **Joint Team for Parish Financial Support** to construct, as quickly as possible, a 'trusting and graceful' process for how parishes can apply for and receive the long-term help they will need. The team is working tirelessly to not only create an entirely new process but to have it approved and made available to parishes next week.
  - c. Third, the CARES Act, which went into effect on March 27, includes provisions to help churches (and millions of other businesses and organizations) keep employees on the payroll. **All advice that I hear urges churches to not delay in submitting their applications for Paycheck Protection Program loans. Yes, even with Holy Week and Easter Week upon us.** In addition to resources sent previously to clergy and treasurers, I urge parish leaders to visit the website of [Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement](#) (DANA) for excellent help available right away.
  - d. Fourth, the Church Pension Fund has offered relief to parishes in multiple forms, including waivers of clergy pension assessments (with no harm to a cleric's eventual pension) and extensions up to 90 days for benefits and insurance payments.
  - e. The above four points are significant, and point to real measures available to parishes to help sustain staff and operations in this pandemic. Again, **I strongly urge parishes to not make any immediate decisions around payroll, especially layoffs, at this moment.**
3. Our support for feeding the hungry in our communities does not end in pandemic; rather, it only becomes more acute. To help coordinate our efforts and resources, a new section on our diocesan [COVID-19 Response Page](#), *Feeding Ministries in Delaware*, has been added. It contains guidance on how to maintain essential feeding ministries from your church in compliance with CDC guidelines and the Governor's SoE. There is also a list of Delaware organizations that you can assist. These organizations are on the frontlines of serving the immediate needs of our neighbors. Our 'Feeding Ministries in a time of Pandemic' working group will continually provide updated information that will be posted on our diocesan response page. The group eagerly welcomes your ideas and information on community resources! Please forward them to us at [tsnow@delaware.church](mailto:tsnow@delaware.church).
  4. At noon tomorrow, Maundy Thursday, I will offer a town hall open to the diocese. Look in this week's edition of *The Net* (published Wednesday, April 8) for how to connect to the town hall and how to submit your questions for me. You can send in questions starting now and through the event itself. I look forward to seeing all of your questions.
  5. I highlight (again!) the fantastic collection of resources we have compiled at [delaware.church](#) on our [Covid-19 Response Page](#). It is well organized, updated regularly, and contains a remarkable range of helpful content. I hear time and again from folks (from ECD and beyond) how glad they are that this has been available from the start, and that it stays current.

## 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. While there is not much for me to offer about this in my weekly update, 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

1. For Holy Week, Easter, and beyond, I again urge you to worship online with your parish and/or parishes close to you. One unexpected grace in these difficult times is the reminder that we are not 34 different churches but rather a single state-wide church with 34 parish locations. There are a number of good reasons why a parish might not offer online worship, and I urge these parishioners to seek online worship from an Episcopal parish nearby. Folks can join me on Sunday mornings at 11:00 as well. The many options in our diocese for worship are gathered and posted at [delaware.church](http://delaware.church) under [Worship and Pray With Us](#).
2. I remind us that all public worship has been suspended in the ECD at least through May 15. This means any 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 allowed an exception for the (sanitary!) distribution of palms for Palm Sunday but do not expect to again. In this same vein, 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 the *maximum* threshold for safe gatherings. The fewer the better.

Yesterday, I celebrated an online Eucharist where we clergy of Delaware renewed our ordination vows. We do this every Tuesday of Holy Week, and since I was first ordained I looked forward to this special time with my colleagues in the church. While doing this via livestream this year was nowhere near as powerful as sharing the moment in person, it nonetheless moved me deeply, and reminded me again how lucky I am to work alongside faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. This Holy Week, I ask your prayers for our priests and deacons and me, in this day and days past and in days to come. Pray for our shared commitment to serve the world by serving Christ’s church.

Your brother in Christ,



+Kevin

\* If you would like to view the Reaffirmation of Ordination Vows, click [here](#). It is typically not a public Eucharist but rather a rare, perhaps even intimate, moment for clergy and bishop. However, given today’s landscape, I think many will appreciate the opportunity to view this special service.