



# The Episcopal Church in Delaware

The Rt. Rev. Kevin S. Brown, Bishop

*all things in love*

*1 Cor. 16:14*

**May 6, 2020** | COVID-19 Response #11 | Message & Task Force Updates

Hello beloved of God in Delaware,

Lately I have been reading First Corinthians, which is Paul's earliest correspondence to a church he helped launch, far away in Corinth, less than twenty years after Jesus' resurrection. It is an endlessly fascinating letter as Paul covers topics both utterly mundane and eternally profound, from talking in church to the reality of resurrection. What has struck me this time throughout First Corinthians is a theme that resonates loud and clear as we respond to pandemic: time and again, Paul reminded the Christians of Corinth that their individual behavior affects others and thus the wider community.

Right now we're reminded that our personal choices, such as keeping our hands clean and our faces masked, have direct impacts on the people around us. The disease reminds me that it is not enough to selfishly worry only if I or my loved ones get sick. Rather, I can transmit a deadly disease to others and never feel ill myself. My decisions — even ones that seem minor — can have major consequences.

Paul said the same thing to the Corinthians, although not about disease. He said that what seemed like minor decisions to some people — such as what they ate or who they hung out with outside of church or how they spoke in worship — could have serious negative impacts on others. The fates of others very much can hinge on what you or I say and do. Reading Paul in 2020, I cannot help but realize again how timeless our holy scriptures are.

Following up my letter to you last Wednesday (about our ultimate return to public worship), let me add two additional notes. First, this past Friday I convened a 'new normal' task force. I invited a group of elected diocesan leaders to help us not only return to worship safely but also to help us do so without losing some of the blessings we have gained from this time apart. For example, our parishes have created new digital worship options and online giving platforms. We have benefited from new pastoral care networks and new ways of remote bible study. We do not expect that returning to worship will mean going back in time or pretending the pandemic never happened. Rather, this return to worship is a step forward into the new church that God is creating right before our eyes. The task force members are Kay Keenan (vice president of Diocesan Council), the Rev. Marianne Ell and Mark Owen (members of Diocesan Council), Terry Flannigan (member of the Standing Committee), the Rev. Brad Hinton (deputy to General Convention), the Rev. Cal Wick (member of the Trustees), and the Rev. Canon Martha Kirkpatrick (chairperson).

Second, I recognize that my current suspension of public worship runs through next Friday, May 15, and I expect to update this in the days to come. In this decision I am relying upon the advice and counsel of our Leadership Council (formed of the president of the Standing

Committee, the vice presidents of Diocesan Council and the Trustees, the dean of our college of clergy, and myself,) as well as the Episcopal Church, and we will continue to follow public health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and adhere to Delaware's state of emergency instructions. All this is to say: keep your eyes and ears open for an update from me very soon.

Stay safe, beloved. Take care of yourself, take care of your neighbor. As Paul wrote to his friends in Corinth so long ago, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1Cor 16:14).

Your brother in Christ,

+ Kevin

+Kevin