



The Episcopal Church in Delaware

The Rt. Rev. Kevin S. Brown, Bishop

all things in love

1 Cor. 16:14

May 27, 2020 | COVID-19 Response #14 | Safely, Boldly, and with Love for One Another

Hello beloved of God in Delaware,

I hope you and your households are safe and well. I pray for all of you daily, each morning to be precise, as I remember the parishes of this blessed church and all the people of our state. I am excited that Pentecost is this coming Sunday! Though I'm heartbroken that I won't be part of a massive Episcopal blow-out-of-a-feast like we Episcopalians like to do it, I will nonetheless wear my red high tops and rejoice anew at the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church. No pandemic has ever stopped the Holy Spirit, and neither will this one.

There is encouraging health news across Delaware. Though the pandemic is still very much a real and present danger in the state, the governor's stay-at-home orders that have been in place since March seem to have been working. Key measures, including the number of daily new COVID-19 hospitalizations and the percentage of COVID-19 tests that are positive, show that Delaware continues to make progress. We are indeed entering Phase 1 of recovery, which I wrote about in my update #12 on May 13.

With these positive trends and coinciding with the start of the summer tourist season, the governor's limitations and restrictions are being slowly relaxed. Worshipping communities, for example, have been permitted to regather under important restrictions on assembly size, social distancing, sanitation, and wearing face masks. While the guidelines for churches are still being settled – they've been modified twice since being released – they will permit parishes who choose to do so the opportunity to offer restricted in-person worship.

I understand why these developments cause folks both hopeful excitement as well as troubling anxiety. On the one hand, we are closer to worshipping in person. On the other hand, our promising public health trends are directly attributable to strict public health measures that are now being loosened.

A couple of reflections come to mind. First, I remain thankful that the governor's choices are supported by scientific and medical data, data whose trends are clearly positive and easily available to track. As those data improve or deteriorate, our public restrictions are expected to change in step with them. For us all, at any particular time, may we make the wisest, best informed, and most loving decisions we can, praying for courage and leaning on grace.

Second, I share the frustration that the timeline for full regathering – including both the governor's restrictions and my own – is neither fast nor easy. On the contrary, the steps toward safe public worship are instead deliberative and challenging. Yesterday, a member of the Standing Committee reminded me why we do not rush. He said, "The decisions we make about public worship right now have life and death consequences. This is hard because this is

dangerous." So true, and yet we need not be fearful! No, indeed. May we rather be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, praying for courage and leaning on grace.

Perhaps speaking of doves is a fitting way to end this note. A thousand blessings to you this Pentecost! Let us go forth – safely, boldly, and with love for one another – rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Your brother in Christ,

+ Kevin

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