

## **An Update from Bishop Love on the Coronavirus And the Temporary Suspension of Church Services**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Given the new coronavirus guidelines handed down by President Trump and his administration (to include avoid gatherings of 10 or more people), I am suspending all regular Sunday and weekday services in the Episcopal Diocese of Albany through the end of March. It is my hope and prayer that we will be able to resume services in time for Holy Week and Easter, but will need to wait to reevaluate the situation at that time, before making a final determination. The annual Chrism Mass will not take place this year. The consecrated Chrism and oil for healing will be distributed to all the clergy of the Diocese at another time to be determined.

In the event that a funeral or burial service is needed during this time of suspension, I would ask that attendance be limited to immediate family members only. I recommend that a larger memorial service honoring the life of the departed member be scheduled once the suspension is lifted.

All currently scheduled parish visits by the Bishop, to include Confirmation services, are on hold until further notice. Once the current crisis has passed, we will reschedule any missed visitations and Confirmation services. In regard to the upcoming scheduled ordination services during March and April, I will be contacting each of the ordinands to discuss possible options.

As you know, I had hoped (given all the health and safety precautions we were trying to implement in each of our congregations during the coronavirus outbreak), that we could keep our Church buildings open for Sunday services. Unfortunately, for reasons stated above, that is not possible.

With that said, even though we are not able to gather together during this time in our Church buildings, we need to remain faithful in our prayers and our study of God's Holy Word, remembering that the Lord is with us where ever we are. As Jesus stated in last Sunday's Gospel passage from John, "God is spirit." He is everywhere at once. As we worship Him in spirit and truth, may our heart and mind be spiritually open to His presence.

Each Sunday, a new recorded sermon and celebration of Holy Communion can be found on the Diocesan Website. Please take advantage of this opportunity to worship together from afar. We will try to include a link to other worship resources as well.

I pray the Lord will give each of us the grace, faith and patience we need during this unprecedented time, as our nation and indeed the world tries to stop the spread of the coronavirus. It is vitally important that each of us try as best we can by the grace of God, to show true Christian love and charity to our neighbors during this time of illness, uncertainty, and disruption to our normal day to day lives. Tensions are high and people are stressed. I know there is a great deal of fear and apprehension by many people all around us. I pray the Lord will give us His peace, taking from us any fear or anxiousness we may be feeling, and that He will

use us to be a channel of His love and mercy and healing grace in the broken and hurting world around us.

Please know you are in my thoughts and prayers. May the Lord watch over and protect you and your loved ones today and in the days to come. God Bless You!

Faithfully Your Brother in Christ,

**+*Bill***

Bishop of Albany