



EPISCOPAL  
DIOCESE of  
INDIANAPOLIS

# From Bishop Jennifer

Dear Ones,

I did not anticipate, when you called me as your bishop, that I would find myself urging members of the diocese not to come to church on Sunday. But thanks to the COVID-19 epidemic, that is where things stand. In this letter, I want to update you on several significant changes in our common life.

**After this Sunday, public in-person worship is to cease until the end of March or upon further notice.**

As people of faith, we must do our part to slow the spread of the new coronavirus and to ease the potentially devastating strain it will place on our health care system. For that reason, **I am urging members of the diocese to stay home from church effective immediately.** Some congregations have already made the decision to worship online this Sunday, and I am glad for that. If you have been planning to worship in person, I hope that you will offer the service of Morning Prayer or the Eucharist with provisions outlined in **my letter of March 9**. If worship is held, it is imperative that social distancing practices-observing a six-foot buffer between each individual--be observed.

Although we cannot gather in person for a while, our common life will continue. I will lead online worship for the diocese each Sunday beginning March 22, and my staff will publicize other opportunities for online worship in our diocese. Please send links to **communication@indydio.org**. Congregations interested in pursuing online worship may consult **this simple guide**. We hope to offer a webinar on online worship in the near future.

Our diocesan offices are closed effective immediately and will reopen when I am advised it is prudent to do so. My staff and I will be working remotely, and I ask that you bear with us as we learn new ways of collaborating and communicating online. All diocesan meetings will be held online beginning immediately. I encourage each congregation to make its own decisions regarding closing its offices, but I ask that you hold all meetings online.

I have also canceled diocesan-wide events through April. **Further details are available on the website.**

Many of our parishes make their buildings available to groups in the wider community. Those space-sharing partners can continue to meet in our facilities at their own risk, as long as the church can make proper provision for cleaning between meetings.

Food pantries and lunch programs should convert to practices **previously suggested in our e-newsletter** so that service to the most vulnerable can continue.

These are anxious times. If I were of a mind, I could quote you any number of scriptural passages urging you not to be afraid. Instead, I ask you to remember that we are the Body of Christ, and we are all in this together. Bear with one another. Bear with your leaders. Bear with me. Pray for one another, and pray especially for the physically and economically vulnerable people who will be hardest hit by this epidemic. Be alert for opportunities to be of service, even as you are mindful that if you carry the virus, your presence is a danger to others.

We are a diocese committed to welcoming and witness. That commitment must not diminish even though we must now take special care in living it out.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer", written in a cursive style.

Bishop Jennifer

March 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. David's Episcopal Church Bean Blossom,

These are interesting times we are going through as a church, state, a nation and globally. Most of our schools are taking a three week hiatus and the churches in the Diocese of Indianapolis including St. David's will not be worshipping in person the last two weeks of March: March 22 and March 29. This Sunday I plan on holding Morning Prayer in the church with no Eucharist. Please use your own judgement as to whether you feel you can attend. We will be using social distancing with a six foot buffer between individuals. After March 15th, I plan on offering online prayer opportunities both through the diocesan office and through worship and devotions I put together myself. We will be exploring ways to use resources such as Facebook Live and Zoom.

<sup>35</sup> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Romans 8:35-39*

May God watch over you and keep you.

Pax,

Mother Mary