



# EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

Clergy and Lay Leaders Communication: COVID-19  
Update # 3: March 20, 2020

Dear Clergy and Wardens in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut:

Grace to you and peace in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We want to begin by expressing our profound thanks to you and to God for all your faithful and inspirational leadership in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. We have been so moved by the incredibly creative ways that you and your parishes have devised to provide liturgical leadership and pastoral care for all in your charge. And we know you are going the extra mile to provide hospitality and care for those in your neighborhood, especially twelve-step groups and individuals and families who are housing and food insecure, while following the best practices to mitigate and suppress the pandemic. Your creative efforts to stay connected to God and one another through prayer and technology have demonstrated that, while health and government officials are calling for “social distancing”, we in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut are practicing “*physical distancing with social and spiritual ‘closening’*”. Thanks be to God.

All information regarding COVID-19 indicate that in the United States, and here in Connecticut, we are still in the early stages of the pandemic; and things are going to get worse before we see a turn for the better. Sadly, one of the first documented deaths from COVID-19 in Connecticut, Mr. William (Bill) Pike was a faithful parishioner and former vestry member of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in New Canaan. We have been in touch with the Rev. Peter Walsh, Rector of St. Mark’s and a member of our Standing Committee, to offer our support to him and the parish even as he has had to provide last rites to Bill and comfort to Bill’s family over the telephone. Companions in Christ, the coronavirus is very real and we must do all in our power as church leaders, and as civic leaders, to stem the spread of COVID-19.

In our previous communications with you we have encouraged you not to hold in-person, public worship through at least the Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 29. Current guidelines offered by both the Center for Disease Control and the White House ask that there be no in-person, public gatherings of more than ten people for at least the next eight weeks. We think this is prudent and appropriate counsel and thus strongly urge all parishes and worshipping communities in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut not to hold in-person, public worship for at least the next eight weeks, or through the fifth Sunday of Easter, May 10. So much is changing so quickly with the coronavirus that even recommending no in-person, public worship for eight weeks is, of course, provisional at best and could be extended if circumstances warrant.

We do appreciate and understand how difficult it is to decide not to hold in-person, public worship for over two months, and especially during Holy Week and the Easter celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We share your pain and sadness at this reality as does our Presiding Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, who recommended the same in his “Word to the Church” this week. [See here.](#)



As your bishops we do believe it is our pastoral responsibility to respond to the reality that in-person, public worship is being curtailed during Holy Week and Easter. To that end we will be working (digitally of course) with the Dean of our Cathedral, The Very Rev. Lina Howell, and the Director of Camp Washington, Mr. Bart Geissinger, to offer an online set of worship services through Holy Week and Easter filmed from these two common spaces of our diocese so that members of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut might participate in Holy Week and Easter together. More to come on this possibility in the near future.

Even as we contemplate not being together in-person to worship God weekly, and especially through Holy Week and Easter, we are hearing inspiring stories of how parishes across our diocese, small and large, urban and rural, with abundant financial resources and few, have found creative ways using digital technology to live stream worship services. These efforts have been a blessing to both regular parishioners as well as many folks who had never connected with The Episcopal Church before. We daresay that over the last week more people have been touched by worship in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut through digital communication than on a “regular” Sunday. This includes many persons living outside of the state. What a blessing you all are to God’s mission.

We appreciate that the realities of the coronavirus mean that business as usual in our personal lives, and in the lives of our parishes, is currently not possible. Such upset, combined with the unpredictable effects the pandemic is having on global financial markets, will have significant financial impact on our parishes. As followers of Jesus and members of the Body of Christ called to be about God’s mission in the world, we cannot let fear and anxiety consume our lives. Our identity and trust are in the Lord who made heaven and earth and who will be with us always, even until the end of time. As catholic Christians (meaning part of the one, holy and universal Church) we are indeed connected to God and one another in real and tangible ways. We urge you to encourage the faithful in your parishes to continue to demonstrate that connection through the maintenance of pledges either on-line or via the US mail. In the same vein, we in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut will continue to make our monthly contribution to the wider Episcopal Church, and we underscore how important it is that parishes continue to keep current on your Common Mission Support and insurance payments. Together we will get through this.

Also, as members of “the One, Holy and Catholic Church” we encourage you to continue to reach out and connect with individual parishioners (especially those who live alone or who are at risk), and those associated with your parish who might not be parishioners, by phone, email, text and social media. It is also an opportunity to write notes and send cards to parishioners using the U.S. Postal Service. We know of many parishes across the diocese whose clergy, wardens and vestries have divided up the parish directory and are calling each and every member of the parish simply to “pass the peace.” We commend that practice to you. Similarly, we would like you to reach out to us individually if there is anything at all we can do to support you in your life and ministry at this time. Our cell phone numbers are at the bottom of this letter.



We also hope you will join us on our regular zoom call for clergy and wardens on Wednesday mornings from 8:30 to 9:30 am. We were blessed to have over 170 of you on the zoom call last Wednesday and look forward to seeing even more of you this week. Details for the zoom call will be on the ECCT website: [www.episcopalct.org](http://www.episcopalct.org).

Finally, our connection to one another as the Body of Christ, is much greater than simply our diocese and/or The Episcopal Church. The Rev. Canon Rebekah Hatch, Rector of St. Albans in Simsbury and the Seabury Canon to our partner diocese, The Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney in the Scottish Episcopal Church, has informed us that our companions in Christ in Scotland will be holding a National Day of Prayer for all affected by COVID-19 this Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. They invite all the faithful to light a candle in their window at 7:00 pm (Scotland time) “as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, the source of hope in this life,” and say a special prayer for the concerns of the world. [See here](#). We invite you and your parishioners to join us as we light a candle with our Scottish sisters and brothers on Sunday at 3:00 pm EDT (7:00 pm Aberdeen time) saying together with them the following prayer:

*For all that is good in life, thank you,  
For the love of family and friends, thank you,  
For the kindness of good neighbour and Samaritan stranger, thank you.*

*May those who are vulnerable, hungry or homeless, experience support,  
May those who are sick, know healing,  
May those who are anxious or bereaved, sense comfort.*

*Bless and guide political leaders and decision-makers, with wisdom,  
Bless and guide health workers and key workers, with strength and well-being,  
Bless and guide each one of us, as we adapt to a new way of living.*

*And may the light shining from our windows,  
across road and wynd, glen and ben, kyle and isle,  
be reflected in our hearts and hands and hopes.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

God bless you all.

Faithfully,

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