

Statement from Episcopal Bishops
of Maryland, District of Columbia and Virginia

Dear Friends in Christ,

In this time when circumstances change from day to day, we Episcopal bishops of Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC have conferred with each other in order to share our best wisdom with you. We know that we are better together during this stressful time, and at all times.

We urge everyone in our congregations to abide by the stay-at-home orders of our civic leaders. The orders make provisions for essential businesses and workers, and they provide mandatory guidelines for individuals and groups.

We have consulted with the offices of Governor Hogan, Governor Northam, and Mayor Bowser regarding the practice of live-streaming or recording services in our houses of worship. All three jurisdictions allow for such offerings provided that:

- No more than 10 persons are present in-person for any service.
- Those participating are not at high-risk for contracting the coronavirus. We are especially concerned for our elder clergy who, in love for their congregations, might take risks. We urge the elders and those with health issues to exercise wisdom and restraint.
- Physical distance of six feet or more is maintained at all times, with hands washed and surfaces cleaned.

Within these parameters, Episcopal churches within our dioceses may offer live-stream or recorded services from our church buildings. This permission does not extend to any other gatherings in our church buildings or grounds, other than on site work by a limited number of church employees necessary for administrative services that cannot be performed remotely. These persons must rigorously observe mandated safety practices.

We fully support clergy and appropriate lay leaders who choose to live-stream or record worship from their homes. In this time when visits to hospitals and other facilities are limited, we urge you to offer pastoral care to people in those facilities via phone or other electronic means.

Should stricter guidelines be mandated in the future, we will adjust accordingly. For now, we will plan our Holy Week and Easter observances with the assurance of Christ's presence with us and in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

The Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Washington

The Rt. Rev. Mark Bourlakas
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia

The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Brooke-Davidson
Assistant Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Virginia

The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff
Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority
Episcopal Diocese of Virginia

The Rt. Rev. Susan Haynes
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia

The Rt. Rev. Robert Ihloff
Assisting Bishop,
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

The Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen
Assisting Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Washington

The Rt. Rev. Santosh Marray
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Easton

The Rt. Rev. Eugene Sutton
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland