



A Message from Bishop Barker: Suspension of Worship

March 20, 2020

Beloved in Christ –

When last I wrote, it was to inform you of my decision to suspend public worship in the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska through April 4, 2020. I promised at that time that we would reassess whether we could safely worship during Holy Week and Easter. I write today to offer some additional direction in that regard.

Let me begin by thanking all of you. We proved to be early adopters as compared to many other religious organizations that did not cancel public worship until after the weekend of Sunday, March 15th. While I firmly believe that our course of action helped to “flatten the curve” and keep our community healthy, I also know we paid a price for embracing that call together. It was difficult to go without Holy Communion and the company of our cherished Christian family when we most longed for those gifts, and as the days have passed, the even weightier reality of canceled weddings and funerals has been born with grace by many of you. I am more grateful than I can say for your commitment and sacrifice. Thank you.

With the [latest government recommendations in mind](#), and having consulted recent communiques from our Presiding Bishop and the larger Episcopal Church, it is now clear that we need to be on a more extended hiatus from worship than we originally hoped, and that our building use needs to be further restricted. Therefore, **I am extending my directive to suspend public worship in the Episcopal Churches of the Diocese of Nebraska through Sunday, May 10th.** Additionally, I am asking that all church ministries that include gatherings of ten or more be curtailed until that date, with the exception of service ministries that provide emergency food or health care. This includes education and formation events, recovery meetings and church administrative meetings.

I recognize the hardship of being the Church under these circumstances, and I know this directive adds to the challenge. I pray that having this additional clarity will assist you in planning and executing your faithful response to the demands of this moment. My heart is full of pride for the faithful way in which you have already born the burdens of this work, and I look forward with you to finding new, creative ways to be the Church and to seek and serve Christ in the days to come.

Faithfully Yours –

+ Bishop Barker