



Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Dear Friends,

“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself...and respect the dignity of every human being?” Episcopalians can almost respond instinctively, boldly exclaiming, “I will with God’s help.” Whenever we celebrate and reaffirm the promise and gifts of Baptism, we all reaffirm our Baptismal Covenant, which serves as the very foundation of all that we do together as well as individuals within the Body of Christ.

I cannot think of a single person who has not been affected by Coronavirus – the pandemic continues to be a challenge to the Body in every sense of the word – individually and collectively. None of us could have ever imagined a year like 2020 has been, and not just in terms of the impact to our ministry, but the impact on just about every aspect of life. One of the greatest challenges of the pandemic is that despite our best efforts, our preparation, precautions and protocols, the situation at-hand calls for even more – even more actions, more cautions, more listening, more consideration, and yes, more patience. Today, we are once again at a moment in the pandemic that is calling for more.

Our Diocese joins with the Diocese of Ohio in directing all congregations to do something more, especially as we anticipate Christmas than any of our single set of plans, policies and procedures. We are directed to exercise even more care for one another and assume the highest level of caution and protocols in the weeks ahead. For us, that means that **we need to assume the protocols associated with our highest degree of health & safety protocols and act within provisions for Level 4 (Purple).**

**Starting Sunday, December 13, all worship will remain available online, but all in-person worship will be suspended and we will assume all protocols associated with Level 4, with all normal programming and school operations suspended and only essential workers onsite. This directive will take us into January, through at least January 10.**

This matches the extra precautions and protocols for our day school, and we are adjusting the start of the spring term back one week to now January 11<sup>th</sup>. We all certainly hope that as we reevaluate the situation in January we can resume our reopening process, but for now it is clear we have to roll-back that process and do more for the health & safety of all.

We remain a worshipping community, just adapting to the context, as we have throughout this health crisis. We still are anticipating Christmas with worship, devotionals and opportunities to share our faith in service with our wider community. Special services, including Christmas, remain available online for you to enjoy and worship as a family devotional practice through our [YouTube Channel](#) and [website](#). This includes Lessons & Carols premiering this Sunday at 5pm on [YouTube](#); later on a family Christmas service & virtual Christmas Pageant, as well as services for Christmas Eve & Christmas Day – Rite I.

As we have already made activity kits for our children & families, we would now like to do something similar for your household for our Christmas services. This Sunday, December 13 from 9am to noon as people drop off the outreach items for the Stocking & Bells and Operation HOPE, you can pick-up a home devotional kit which will include candles and blessed wafers so that we can still all share in Christmas Communion. Just drive-up to the church this Sunday from 9am to noon and pick-up a kit for your household.

Beyond Christmas, we continue to provide worship [online via our YouTube channel](#) for both for Sundays and our Midweek Evening Prayer Services. The church will also remain open for individual prayer: Mondays and Wednesdays from 10am to noon; as well as Tuesdays & Thursday afternoons 3-5pm. Our parish office continues to have limited staff on-hand to coordinate essential ministry services, including pastoral care on call and by appointment. For more information, please reach out to us by email [office@stthomasepiscopal.org](mailto:office@stthomasepiscopal.org) or calling the office at (513) 831-2052. Remember we have a [dedicated page within our website](#) where you can find the latest updates and resources regarding St. Thomas and our response to [COVID-19](#), as well as information on how you can support us, especially at this time. [You can pledge and donate even directly online.](#)

Please be well, stay connected and may God’s PEACE and blessings be with you and your family this Christmas and beyond!

*I’ll see you online and back in-person soon.*

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE REV. DARREN R.S. ELIN  
RECTOR OF ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

100 MIAMI AVENUE • TERRACE PARK, OHIO 45174 • EMAIL: [DARREN@STTHOMASEPISCOPAL.ORG](mailto:DARREN@STTHOMASEPISCOPAL.ORG)  
PARISH OFFICE: 513.831.2052 • FAX: 513.831.4561 • [WWW.STTHOMASEPISCOPAL.ORG](http://WWW.STTHOMASEPISCOPAL.ORG)