



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA

THE RIGHT REVEREND SUSAN E. GOFF, BISHOP SUFFRAGAN

2020. It is a year we will never forget, even as we ardently wish we could. All of our old familiar patterns have been thrown into disarray. We are being stretched. We are being challenged. We are being given remarkable gifts of hope and resilience. Through it all *How will we do more than just survive? How will we thrive?*

In Jesus' name,

We will thrive together. In a diocese of 179 church congregations, six church schools, six diocesan homes, two conference centers, and four college ministries, we are each a part of something bigger. And we are not alone. Our diocesan staff provided resources to congregations as you shifted from in-person to online worship. This support enabled your congregation to maintain community in ways that work in your context. It also helped you navigate financial strains on your community. We came together in places across the Diocese to help our neighbors with food and funds when they lost work. We have held each other in prayer. We are thriving -- together.

In Jesus' name,

We will thrive by proclaiming the Good News. All that we do begins and ends with the love of God made known to us in Christ Jesus. When we work to make sure that our neighbors are fed, when we support friends whose children are home from school, when we wear masks and keep physically distant for the sake of the most vulnerable, we proclaim the love of Jesus in concrete ways. Although we miss the bread and wine of communion, we experience the presence of Jesus and of each other in new and remarkable ways. In this difficult wilderness of COVID-19, God is present. God is always present in the wilderness, showing us the way through. We are thriving as we proclaim God's love -- together.

In Jesus' name,

We will thrive because we are rooted in baptism. In the water of baptism we are *One Together*. We are strengthened to keep the vows and promises we made -- not only individually, but as one. Because the water of baptism is thicker than blood. In baptism there is one Body and one Spirit. There is one hope in God's call to us as we are drawn fully into the love of the one God. We are thriving as one in God who loves us beyond our imagining.

This year you'll hear from other voices, as well as mine, over the next several weeks. Each of us has a different perspective but our love for Jesus in the Diocese of Virginia is steadfast. Please take the time to consider your pledge with your vestry and complete the enclosed card. You may return it in the enclosed envelope or complete the diocesan pledge form <http://www.thediocese.net/forms/pledge-form/> by October 14th.

Faithfully,

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The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff
Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority