

## **Outreach and Mission in the Time of COVID-19.**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has dramatically changed our everyday lives. Used to in-person fellowship with our siblings and neighbors in Christ, we are now navigating through an unknown land that relies heavily on technology and where physical contact with one another puts us at risk of contracting the virus.

As a Church, we are called to care for one another, not just by protecting each other's health, but also by providing support for those who may be struggling during this time and beyond.

So, how do we do outreach and mission safely and well in the time of COVID-19? Here are a few suggestions:

### **Be prepared to provide information and offer assistance to access government programs**

During this time, there are many who do not have access to information or simply don't know where to start. You can be a calming presence and a source of encouragement by providing information and helping people by making calls or providing internet access.

- Virginia 211 has access to lots of useful information about unemployment and snap
  - <https://www.211virginia.org/consumer/index.php>
- Understand who and how people will receive the stimulus check provided by the CARES Act:
  - People between the ages of 17 to 24 who are claimed as dependents are ineligible.
  - People who are undocumented, or live in mixed-status households are ineligible.
  - If you have no income and/or have not filed taxes, you are still eligible to apply.
  - Individuals must have a physical address, PO Box or bank account to receive the stimulus check; this might be a way that churches could assist homeless or marginally housed people.
  - The forms are online, so people will need internet access to fill it out. This might be another way that churches could be of assistance.
  - Even if you filed your taxes you may need to add your banking information on the IRS website.
- Make sure you have information available in the languages spoken by your surrounding community. **Organize to provide protective equipment for medical personnel and people in need**

We all know that there is limited access to masks, gloves, and other protective equipment. These items are especially important to those in healthcare and those with vulnerable health or living in crowded spaces. One way to help is to provide sewn or medical grade masks.

- Check in with your local shelters
  - Ask about the need for masks, but also remember to ask about other needs
- Direct request for N95's, surgical masks and/or cloth masks with pockets for filters from Physicians and Midwives in Northern Virginia

- Contact: Kathleen Bell, Nurse practitioner, by text at 804.514.8898
- Other organizations in need
  - <https://www.deaconess.com/How-to-make-a-Face-Mask/Mask-Donations?state=Virginia>

### **Donate Blood**

There has been a shortage of blood donors due to COVID-19. Blood is a very important resource for many people experiencing a health crisis or emergency trauma. You can organize a virtual blood drive and have people check-in through social media when they arrive at their local blood bank to donate.

- <https://americasblood.org/for-donors/find-a-blood-center/>

### **Feeding Ministries**

At the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus said: “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” (Matthew 14:15). While we must continue to observe social distancing and use protective equipment, we must continue to feed the hungry. There are plenty of opportunities available to continue this ministry, while maintaining your health and that of those we serve.

- Volunteer or donate at local food pantries and banks
  - Several of our churches are continuing to operate their food pantries with a limited number of volunteer, limiting contact and using protective equipment
  - Check in with other churches in your area
  - Federation of Virginia Food Banks <https://vafoodbanks.org/about-us/our-network/>
    - This link provides info on needs, as well as safety measures being used
- Underground Kitchen Info and Update – The Rev. Deacon Barbara Ambrose
  - The Underground Kitchen is using Episcopal commercial kitchens to cook soup, bread, and make tea that is then delivered to medical professionals on the field, the homeless and other low-income individuals and first responders.
  - <https://theundergroundkitchen.org/sign-up-for-soup/>
  - For more info on the program, Barbara’s email: cats4cats@comcast.net
- Calvary Front Royal Feeding Ministry – The Rev. Valerie Hayes
  - In partnership with the community, Calvary continues its feeding ministry by working with other churches in their area and maintaining safety measures.
  - For questions and best practices, Valerie’s email: vhayescalvary@gmail.com

### **Domestic and International Mission**

As a Church, we are called to engage in mission. However, COVID-19 presents a challenge in that things can’t be business as usual. That does not mean we stop doing mission. It means we do a lot of praying and think of creative ways to continue to do God’s work.

**List Your Ministries Online at [EpiscopalAssetMap.org](https://episcopalassetmap.org)**

- It's an easy way to let the Diocese, the Episcopal Church, and your friends and neighbors know what you are doing
- Visit the website to update your church's profile's and check out profiles from throughout the Church nationwide.
- Contact Aisha Huertas for Technical Assistance, [ahuertas@thediocese.net](mailto:ahuertas@thediocese.net)

**Though traveling and in person meetings are not recommended, you can still be in touch and nurture relationships by:**

- **Phone Calls** - When we cannot be with each physically it is nice to hear a familiar voice, so one way to connect is to simply pick up a phone and make a call.
- **WhatsApp** - One of the most popular messaging tools is WhatsApp. Many of your partners will have this free app that allows for messaging, voice calls, and video calls on smart phones. It is an immediate way to say hello and check in on someone. This is particularly useful for foreign contacts.
- **Emails** - Sometimes our inboxes get inundated with ads or mass generated messages and it can be a wonderful surprise to receive a personal email from a friend. This is a quick and easy way to send a note of encouragement or to check in without worrying about your time zone differences.
- **Facebook and Instagram** - Social media platforms are a great way to follow all of your partners and for your partners to follow you. Share your photos, stories, and videos while also interacting with your partner's photos, stories, and videos.
- **Zoom/Skype** - Video chat has made being present with people around the world much easier. Zoom or Skype are 2 free platforms you can use to talk to your partners face to face. You can invite partners to speak at online formation, participate in virtual coffee hours, or be present in any virtual gathering your community may be having.
- **Prayer** - Pray for each other. This is something that you are probably doing anyways, but let your partners know you are praying for them. Ask for specific things you can be praying for and tell them how they can be praying for you.
- **Virtual Services** - Participating in worship is an essential part of our faith life and churches all over the world are navigating how to make worship accessible without gathering in person. Invite your partners to participate in your virtual services and look to see what your partners are doing. Is there a way to do a service together?
- **Letters/Art** - Invite your Sunday school children to draw pictures or make cards for your partners. These can be mailed to partners or simply shared as photos. Everyone can be involved in sharing Christ's love and mutual support in this time.
- **Video messages/reflections** - Make short video messages to share with your partners. Share your sermons and reflections.
- **Share Stories of hope and love** - Lastly, let us know what you are doing so that we can share it with others as a source of joy and encouragement! Send your stories of how you are connecting to Aisha Huertas, Diocesan Minister for Missional Engagement and Jenny Grant, the Episcopal Church's Officer for Global Relations and Networking at [jgrant@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:jgrant@episcopalchurch.org).

- **Follow Global Partnerships on Facebook and Instagram, and GEMN on Facebook** to stay connected with our global community.

### **Other Useful Resources**

- Diocesan COVID-19 Resources - Outreach
  - <http://www.thediocese.net/news-and-events/covid-19-resources/outreach-and-partner-ministries/>
- Volunteer Opportunities within Diocese
  - Arlington–<https://volunteer.leadercenter.org/covid-19-care-community>
  - Fairfax – <https://www.volunteerfairfax.org/>
  - NoVA – <https://www.nvfs.org/support/top-donation-needs/donate-items/>
  - Henrico –<https://www.henicocitizen.com/articles/henrico-launches-outreach-call-center-for-older-residents/>
  - For all of Virginia – <http://virginiaservice.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CORONAVIRUSVAFLYER2-2.pdf>