



## Clergy Webinar December 8, 2020

### Summary of Bishop Goff's remarks:

Click [here](#) for Bishop's full remarks.

- 1) The numbers of new cases are increasing dramatically. No locality is currently eligible for in-person indoor worship per the health markers. Some nearby dioceses have issued a blanket "no" to all indoor gathering for the next several weeks.
- 2) We are directing you to cease outdoor gatherings immediately.
- 3) With Christmas Eve and Christmas Day approaching, many in our Diocese are hoping for some way to gather. From a risk standpoint, it is the same whether it is Christmas Eve or December 21<sup>st</sup>. But because of the pressure you may be feeling to do something in-person for Christmas Eve, we are offering you the option to do outdoor services on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, following all the protocols we have already laid out for outdoor worship, such as distancing, masks, no congregational singing and no touching. The numbers that you said you could accommodate when you asked for permission to do outdoor worship are the maximum numbers. We would advise that the risk is high and you should think long and hard before you commit to do this, but if you need to make that choice, you may do so, for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day only. Contact Bishop Susan or Canon Mary Thorpe if you have specific questions for your situation.

### Q&A on Worship Protocols

Is visitation okay? Are there revised guidelines? *Because of the numbers and increased risk, weigh it very carefully. Such visits create risk to visitor and the visited.*

How does this align with what our neighboring dioceses are doing? Parishioners report that they are doing more than we are permitted to do. *The contexts are slightly different from diocese to diocese. As we see in our own Diocese, some localities are very high-risk zones and others are not. We do not exactly align with our neighboring dioceses, but we are similar in our approaches. Some dioceses, by the way, have completely shut down all indoor gathering as a blanket policy; we are trying to be more nuanced about it.*

Clarifying - are we only allowed to worship outdoors on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. *Yes*

Our youth have been meeting outdoors under a tent on Sundays. Should that end as well as our regular outdoor worship (excepting Xmas Eve and Day?) *That is my best advice.*

***Bishop Goff also indicated that, if it is your belief that you need to have a clear mandate for not doing outdoor worship, she will provide it for you. Contact her directly on that.***

What would be the recommendation for an outdoor burial if under 10 people? *If it cannot wait until the numbers go down, you can do it if you adhere to all the guidance on distancing, masks, brevity of the service, etc. Some have had the experience of having difficulty keeping people spaced for such services, so use your judgment before you say yes.*

When does this take effect? *This is immediate. We know, though, that for some of you there is already a plan in place for outdoor worship for this Sunday. If you feel like you cannot change gears for this Sunday, then you can cease outdoor worship the following Sunday.*

If we use FM transmission for an outdoor service where folks stay in their cars, can folks sing in their cars, windows closed? *Yes.*

We are wondering if we could have our outdoor services in our parking lot, with everyone in their cars and not gathered physically? Eucharist would be distributed in one kind, prewrapped, with no direct human contact between the elements or the people receiving. *I'm not quite sure how you would give people the Eucharist without direct human contact, since they'd have to roll down their car windows and someone would have to hand them the wafer. Check with Canon Mary.*

So are you asking us not to gather outside for worship at all -- but we may if we choose the risk -- or we may if we choose to risk only for Christmas Eve/Day? *That is correct.*

Are there recommended numbers to limit the outdoor Christmas Eve Services for attendance? *Presuming you already were approved for outdoor worship, the same numbers would apply. In essence, you need to gauge how many discrete family units/individuals you can fit in the outdoor space so that there is six feet of distance in all directions between them.*

We are currently planning outdoor for Christmas Eve. I am going to check if we are orange or red. But I will upset a lot of people. It would be a lot easier to have a mandate than "an ask." *If you need a direct mandate, contact Bishop Susan and she will give you that.*

What about charities that may be using our building to distribute food and Christmas gifts? Fewer than ten people inside at any time, for as short a time as possible. All doors and windows open. *Please do continue this important work.*

To be clear, only Christmas Eve is possibly approved for outdoor in person worship. Not any other outdoor worship? *Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, no other outdoor worship.*

Also, does the request to discontinue outdoor worship apply to drive-in services as well? *If people are remaining in their cars with the windows closed, you may continue to have outdoor worship.*

Can you ask the Bishop to please clarify: Starting immediately there is no outdoor worship at all, with the exception of Christmas Eve and Day, at our discretion? Is that correct? *Yes.*

We will be doing a virtual Lessons & Carols for the Sunday after Christmas. We have recorded part of this already. Would one of the Bishops make available a recording of one of the readings for our use in that service? *We are in the process of preparing and recording our diocesan December 27 service of Lessons and Carols. It will be available soon. You may use whatever part of it you would like.*

If we meet outside on Christmas Eve, we cannot sing. Is that correct, even if we wear masks and social distance? *Correct.*

Does the ban on worship outdoors apply to funerals as well? *We continue to recommend that if you must do a funeral, that you follow the guidelines in [this document](#).*

May we continue Eucharist at the Drive-In services? *Contact Canon Mary Thorpe directly.*

Can the Eucharist be distributed according to Diocesan guidelines to the ten or fewer people producing the on-line only services? *Please email Canon Mary Thorpe ([mthorpe@thediocese.net](mailto:mthorpe@thediocese.net)) a fuller explanation of what you are proposing.*

We had planned for a handful of people to decorate one outdoor tree on Saturday. It sounds as if we need to suspend that activity and have only our sexton decorate the tree. Would this be a preferred plan? *Use your best judgment. You will need to ask yourself if they can they keep distanced.*

Why is there a distinction being made between holding in person outdoor services on a Sunday and on Christmas Eve & Day? *Not because there is any difference in the health risk, but because of the emotion and pressure that you are under. I offer that as a potential exception, but prefer that you not do that. If it's easier, I'll do a blanket "no."*

I have an outdoor burial office in the graveyard scheduled for next week with fewer than 10 people. Is that alright? *Yes.*

At first, the Bishop said: "I ASK you to suspend all outdoor in person services." Next, the response to a question was: "All outdoor services are suspended except for Christmas Day & Eve." This is very confusing. *I gave the one exception of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.*

Did you say that folks may sing inside their cars at an outside service? *As long as the windows of the vehicle remain closed.*

Why is there a blanket distinction being made between "drive up services" and outdoor services without any consideration for the size of the outdoor space being used for outdoor services? *Because the level of risk for individuals in a vehicle with the windows closed is just about as low as watching a livestream in one's own home.*

What about AA Groups? *Twelve-step groups can continue to meet, cautiously, following the guidelines for masks and distancing.*

How will this be communicated to the Diocese? *As we normally do, we will post a recap to the webinar on our Diocesan website, under "Bishop's Guidance," tomorrow. You, as our priests, will communicate it with your parishioners as you see fit.*

## Congregational meetings online

Canon Mary Thorpe said there had been inquiries about doing online congregational meetings, so she reminded attendees of the [guidance](#) from our Diocesan Chancellor, JP Causey. She noted that a number of parishes had already done this, and asked any attendees who wished to self-identify as having done that in their parish to note that in the chat stream, so others might tap them for their experience. Grace Cangialosi at Christ Church, Brandy Station; Jo Belser at Church of the Resurrection, Alexandria; and Shirley Smith Graham at Christ Church, Glen Allen, indicated they have held online congregational meetings.

Then, the Very Rev. Fran Gardner-Smith talked about how she held an online meeting at St. Thomas, McLean, because of the requirement to have a vote for the disposition of a piece of property. Because they had not yet mastered the Zoom poll feature, they simply asked attendees to post Yea or Nay on chat. They were able to determine a quorum count by seeing the number of attendees and scanning to see if there were any problems with that. The meeting followed the normal process following the protocol JP described. Questions could be addressed. Then they voted. Fran said, "Now I'd use a zoom poll rather than typing the responses." Fran offered to be a resource and answer questions for anyone who would like to contact her at [fran.gardnersmith@stthomasmcleanva.org](mailto:fran.gardnersmith@stthomasmcleanva.org).

## Q&A related to online meetings

How did you accommodate members who are unable to access zoom? *We only had a couple of members who dialed in.*

How did you make certain only eligible worshippers/members voted? *We trusted the Holy Spirit.*

Fran, were there particular concerns about achieving a quorum for your meeting? I have many who are not willing to use electronic means and wonder how that impacts a quorum. From Bishop Susan: *It's good for us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Be attentive as possible, knowing that the requirement for voting is that voters are Communicants in Good Standing. And it's a low bar – only 10% of Communicants in Good Standing is usually pretty easy to reach to achieve a low quorum.*

What about individuals who regularly attended worship prior to the pandemic but have not attended Zoom worship for eight months? *While we want people to take seriously their responsibility to worship as part of the parish, this may be a time when a little grace would be called for.*

May Vestry Elections occur via email? *According to the guidance that our Chancellor has given us, this is not possible.*

## Other Questions and Announcements

What is the status of the diocesan **Cafeteria 125 plan**? Per Ted Smith: *Some of you who use an external payroll processor may have received a solicitation to use their service for this provision. In the interest of saving costs for you, we've asked the attorneys at Troutman Sanders to create the template documents for parishes for a Cafeteria 125 plan. Work is not finished yet and we hope to distribute those documents before the end of the year.*

**From Mark Eastham:** We know how quickly the news cycle turns these days, and we're aware that we are challenged to always give you the most up-to-date information possible. Thus we've made the decision to discontinue the **Virginia Episcopalian**. Because of the lead time for production and printing, it's often stale news. We wanted to let you know about this as you are working on your budgets, because one of your expense line items is probably the cost of subscriptions to the VE for your folks. This should free up some funds for other needs for you.

**From the Rev. Sarah Kye Price:** An open invitation to my clergy colleagues: Our St. Phoebe School Advent Evening Prayer (led by our diaconal postulants) takes place right after this call and all Tuesdays of Advent at 5 p.m. We'd love to have any of you join us if you'd like to. You can find the service and the Zoom link here: <https://virtual-chapel.com/2020/12/08/advent-evening-prayer-for-december-8/>