

August 25, 2020

Clergy Webinar Week #24

Opening Prayer

Welcome to our clergy webinar for week 24. Today we'll reflect together on what sustains us during this time. What spiritual practices, old habits or new hobbies sustain you? We three bishops will each share a brief reflection on what sustains us, then send everyone to small chat rooms to share with each other.

We will not have a Q and A today. I invite you to post your questions in chat, send them directly to Mark Eastham or bring your questions about phased regathering to your area coach. We will respond to these questions.

Before we get to our main topic, a few updates.

1. Our extraordinary Canon to the Ordinary, Mary Thorpe, has pulled together a Frequently Asked Questions document. We recognize that there is a lot to wade through on our diocesan website when you are looking for specific information. The FAQ pulls together important information on one page. Go to the website, click on "Church life and worship in the time of Covid-19," and you will find a quick link to the Q and A. We will also include it in the follow up materials we send you tomorrow.
2. We remind you of the Morning Prayer Service for Sunday, September 6, the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. It will be led by the Bishops and diocesan staff. It will be bilingual, with the entire service bulletin in English and Spanish side by side, the sermon in both languages and portions of the service in each language. It will be available on a variety of platforms. We hope that it be a gift and support for you who work so hard to produce meaningful worship week after week. Every congregation is welcome to participate in this diocesan worship, but no one is required to.
3. We will also continue Sermons from the Bishops Online Chapel for each Sunday between now and the end of the year. They, too, will be available on a variety of platforms.
4. The Task Group on Eucharist sent recommendations to the bishops yesterday. I thank them for grappling faithfully with the complexity of these issues. I am reading and processing their suggestions and pulling them together with work done by other dioceses and work that is continuing in the House of Bishops. We three bishops of Virginia will bat this around some more this week and I anticipate sharing soon options and guidelines for distributing wafers at outdoor worship - and at indoor worship as soon as congregations get to that phase.
5. I am aware of the frustration some people in some of your congregations are expressing about communion. I am aware of people who have threatened to leave The Episcopal Church or already have because, they say, they've been denied communion or because

they miss it. I am sorry that you are facing this blowback. Like you, I have not had communion since March 8, either. I am not asking anyone to do anything that I myself am not doing. I am asking us all to continue to recall that what draws us together with God and each other is not the sacrament alone but, as we read in Acts 2:42, “ They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” We miss one of these four hallmarks of Christian for a little while longer, and we still practice the other 3 - the apostles’ teaching, community with God and with each other, and the prayers. This pandemic time will end. It will not last forever. We continue to adjust and adapt until it does. God bless us all as we strive to be as faithful as we can as we honor and protect one another.

6. Finally, a few words about these webinars and an invitation for your input. After doing webinars weekly in March through June, we moved to every other week for the summer. Would you like to continue every other week, or return to weekly in September? We will take a poll on this question right now.
7. Based on your input, we will gather for a webinar every other week, beginning September 15. Future topics will include Christian formation for youth and adults, voting and voting rights in this political season, Advent and Christmas worship and activities, and other topics that you suggest.