

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR BISHOP SUSAN'S WORDS FROM TODAY'S (4/1/20) CLERGY ZOOM CONFERENCE REGARDING ONLINE WORSHIP AND PALM SUNDAY**

Q and A from Clergy Zoom Sessions from March 31<sup>st</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>.

How is Bishop Goff? **Well, thank you, and grateful for all the prayers that have been a source of support.**

Watching today, (I have previously tuned in on Tuesday) I realize that the two sessions might not be basically the same. Is this correct? Are the two sessions different topics? **This is true, simply because the situation is evolving so rapidly. We will send out emails to clergy (and to lay leaders in congregations without clergy at the moment) when things shift so that the latest word is available to all.**

Liturgical Practices: This is a question for the Bishop for someone who is in good health, 69 years old, the only priest of her parish, a parish in a rural community where finding supply is very difficult at present. My first career was as a public health nurse so I am well aware of clinical situation and risks. Much planning has gone into our preparation for Holy Week. Live streaming from home is not a practical possibility as I rely on satellite for internet access at home. May I continue PLEASE to celebrate Eucharist Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday, subject to ongoing discernment of personal well-being? I can record MP for other times... but for these holy services I feel strongly drawn to offer Holy Eucharist. Will this be acceptable? **Yes, of course you can record Holy Eucharist. You will not be able to offer the physical Eucharist, but a spiritual one.**

Do you have any guidance about using music for recorded and/or streamed services? Does RiteSong sufficient or do we need to look at One License? **This is what we know from OneLicense. We don't know yet if they will extend this beyond April 15<sup>th</sup>. We have not yet found anything vis-à-vis RiteSong but do reach out to them and ask. Our guess is that no one is being the copyright police for the moment.**

Given Gov. Northam's direction to "stay home," does the bishop plan to stop live-streaming from churches? **Not at this time. We do continue to instruct clergy that the number of participants in such a service should not exceed 10 and the six-foot distancing should be observed. And as with all guidance, this guidance is subject to change if the situation requires it. [UPDATE: see your 4/1/20 email from Bishop Susan regarding this.]**

Our small rural parish does not have the technical capability and WiFi access required to LiveStream Sunday morning worship, so we have gathered as a virtual worship team of five persons and video-recorded Sunday worship on Saturdays. Given Gov. Northam's "stay in place" directive, should we discontinue this practice? **As above, this is still allowed, as long as there is at least six feet of distance between each of the individuals. For small parishes, we strongly urge you to record at home rather than in the church building because it is so difficult to maintain the distance requirements.**

I'm interested in knowing about how the pandemic might affect our practice of Eucharist moving forward. Will there be changes made to how we offer the chalice, for instance? **It is too soon for us to answer that question. Right now, our task is to be present to the situation as it now exists, and to live into our ministry in this new environment as best we can.**

If there is already a burial scheduled in April at Arlington, do you know if they are going ahead? as long as less than 10? **It is our understanding that Arlington Cemetery is proceeding with services as scheduled. They may have further guidance as to the limit of attendees given the current pandemic. Please check with them.**

Children, in watching livestreaming, are concerned that they are not able to participate in Holy Communion. What would you suggest? **Have a conversation! If they're missing it, this can spur a conversation about how they feel when they participate in the Eucharist, and how wonderful it will feel when we're finally able to do that again together. You might talk about the fact that church is the place where we have the bread and the wine because it's a special kind of meal. Some children do "play" communion, and while it's definitely not going to be rubrical it might be yet another way for children to work through their feelings of wanting to have communion.**

Because we can't celebrate in the church for Easter, is it permissible to have an Easter celebration when we are all back together in our sanctuary. **Yes, we will all joyfully say He is Risen, He is Risen indeed and have a great celebration together. The exact form of such a celebration will be a source of discussion among Bishops when we have a clearer sense of when can finally be together again. Certainly the readings for Easter may not be quite right, but we will give you further guidance when we have greater clarity about the reopening dates.**

May we mail palms to folks? **We don't know how restrictive the Postal Service is being about such things, but perhaps. It would quite expensive if your congregation is large. You might encourage your folks to simply go into their yards and get a branch of some sort. After all, the disciples of Jesus just grabbed what was nearby when he began his entry into Jerusalem. Some places are encouraging children to color in pictures of palms. Paris will put resources relating to this on the Formation part of the COVID-19 diocesan webpage.**

We're prepared to leave our palms outside. Folks can drive by to pick them up from a table on the sidewalk near the driveway. Then, virtually, we'll bless the palms. Yes or No? **We would advise against it given the new guidelines from the Governor. Our concern is that people would have to violate stay-at-home requirements to come get them!**

I blessed our palms and we cut them so that they would fit into an envelope and mailed them along with a Palm Sunday postcard. **See above.**

#### **Formation:**

(repeated from above) Children, in watching livestreaming, are concerned that they are not able to participate in Holy Communion. What would you suggest? **Have a conversation! If they're missing it, this can spur a conversation about how they feel when they participate in the Eucharist, and how**

wonderful it will feel when we're finally able to do that again together. You might about the fact that church is the place where we have the bread and the wine because it's a special kind of meal. Some children do "play" communion, and while it's definitely not going to be rubrical it might be yet another way for children to work through their feelings of wanting the have communion.

Paris, what about when the children "simulate" by putting bread and juice out on their table. **See above.**

One suggestion for children. We receive a weekly children's bulletin with activities, and I've seen forwarding that mailing to parents to download and print. **A wonderful idea!**

**Related Organizations/ Administration:** We have allowed our 12 steps groups to continue to meet at Christ Church so long as they assure us they are splitting the group if it exceeds 10 and following safe distancing/hand washing/no face practices. However, the bishops' letter released today seems to prohibit this. May I get a clarification? **We'd suggest you have a conversation with the leader/contact person for each of your 12-step groups, asking what guidance they've received from the parent organization, and encouraging them to explore other options. Recovery is important, and resources to sustain recovery are important, but most of the twelve-step programs are moving toward different ways of meeting at this time. This is not a hard "stop," rather an encouragement from you to them to consider other options, even with the precautions you've mentioned.**

**Administration:**

When will the webinars be for treasurers and wardens that will have this information? **Invitations and further info will be sent to all who are on our list later this afternoon.**

When will there be contact from the diocesan staff for our treasurers and wardens? **Information and an invitation is being sent out today (April 1.)**

How Does Governor Northam's order to have everyone stay at home, except essential personnel, affect the churches? Should clergy and staff work at home as much as possible, at least as an example that we are following the governor's orders? Should church offices be closed? **As we've said before, there is great wisdom and great science behind staying at home. Churches fall into the "essential" class and workers can go to their jobs at churches. That said, if it is possible for employees (lay and ordained) to work from home, they should. However, if any cleric or lay staffer tests positive, the office should definitely be closed. If your lay leadership has a problem with that, refer them to the Bishops or to the Canon to the Ordinary. For the record, Mayo House is closed and our employees are now working from home. Our phone extensions are forwarded to our cellphones.**

Other than the Priest-in-Charge, the only full-time employee on premise is the Parish Administrator. Should she discontinue physically reporting to work, given Gov. Northam's directive? **See above.**

What are the parameters for remote meetings of vestry and congregations? **Many parishes are now using Zoom and other technology for vestry meetings. It might be possible to do a congregational**

meeting that way as well, but it might prove technologically difficult for all but the smallest of parishes.

How is Shrine Mont handling parish retreats and need to cancel if scheduled before June 10? ShrineMont set their reopening date of May 8<sup>th</sup> prior to the March 30<sup>th</sup> announcement by the Governor. We haven't seen an update from them in response to that, so our suggestion would be for you to contact them.

To the point about clergy in hospitals... is there a possibility about getting a recognized clergy ID? One hospital in the area now requires that you register – they had a huge amount of people fraudulently claim that they were clergy. Just a thought. I do not expect an answer now, just wondering if we can think about some options as the world around us changes. It is unclear that any clergy other than chaplains employed by hospitals will be allowed into hospitals soon. Many Virginia hospitals are already putting that into effect. That said, we recognize that this might be a useful tool. We'd suggest that you contact hospitals in your area to see what they require in terms of an ID. Currently we give the newly ordained an 8x10 copy of their (very large) ordination certificate, and we often give out Letters of Good Standing for permission to officiate at marriages and such. Further clarity in what the hospitals are looking for would be helpful so that we can be most helpful to you.

#### Finance:

As a mission do we go through the Diocese for Cares Act or do we do it directly? The answer is that it depends on whether or not your payroll is run through the Diocese or not. Please check with Diocesan Treasurer Ted Smith [tsmith@thediocese.net](mailto:tsmith@thediocese.net) for guidance on that.

Is the DOV contemplating applying for an across-the-board SBA economic disaster loan for a group of congregations seeking to retain clergy, especially where solo clergy, and cash/savings is running low? Each parish must apply individually. There will be a document posted on the Finance section of the COVID-19 diocesan resource page on April 1<sup>st</sup> that will discuss what we know at this time about offerings under the CARES Act.

Re: the stimulus bill now signed into law: Are clergy eligible for unemployment insurance? What about contractual church musicians? Employees, both lay and ordained, both full and part-time, are eligible. Contractors are not. However, be aware that if a cleric applies, they cannot work as a priest while they are receiving unemployment benefits. This suggests that even if you are experiencing financial struggles, putting the cleric on unemployment might not be the answer. Remember, too, that the employer will be responsible for half of the benefits paid to anyone who receives unemployment benefits under this provision. Note that the language of the bill regarding unemployment benefits leaves many questions still open. We look forward to seeing the regulations when they are promulgated so we have greater clarity.

Some guidance, please, about vestry and clergy choices/approaches re: 1 and/or 2? Please presume clergy are not willing to abandon their congregations when payroll cannot be met. See above.

So the church has very little money left now. Rector is main expense but not the only expense.

Congregation does not have deep pockets at all and many are affected by current financial meltdown. Therefore, it seems as if the SBA loan and/or unemployment could help both the congregation and rector. But what approach to take? Does the congregation lay off the rector? What happens to the congregation? How does the rector respond to vow to serve them? Is that even legal to continue to serve if receiving UC? Is a SBA loan a better option where the congregation wants to survive? Can there be a temporary lay-off if there is a gap before a SBA loan is available? **This is a decision that must be addressed by each congregation depending on its particular situation. Look at the document that will be posted on April 1 – it will give you a good deal of background.**

Mary mentioned an unemployment benefit of \$600 a week. Our lay secretary works part time and receives 1200 a month. It seems that unemployment benefits at 600 a week could cost the church more. I thought unemployment benefits were a percentage of pay received. Can you clarify? **See above: we're still trying to get clarity about that. We'll let you know.**

Unemployment provided for part time employees too? Or must be full time? **It is for part-time employees, too, from what we understand. That said, unemployment benefits are administered by the state, so we'll look for further guidance from them as well.**

Does the unemployment benefit include part-time? And is it a fixed amount or based on their part-time pay **See above.**

Mary, please repeat what you just said about congregations applying for CARES and that clergy couldn't serve . **As with any unemployment benefit, if a cleric applies for unemployment benefits under CARES, they cannot serve the parish. They are unemployed. That's why there is the Paycheck Protection Program, the intent of which is to keep people employed.**

"We cant double dip by applying for both loans." Can you reiterate names of which two loans you are referring to – **The CARES Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL.)**

To Ted; We may be shopping for a bank loan in the next year or so, does applying and receiving a CARES grant conflict with qualifying for a bank loan? **If you get a PPP, it's available between February 15<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. It is designed to cover up to two months of payroll. If the employees are retained for that period, the loan (or at least the principal of the loan) is forgiven. It will be off your books by the time you apply for another loan.**

Does the CARES act require you to turn in a "letter" ?? **If what you are referring to is a letter of tax exempt status, you should have that as part of your application package. If you do not have one (it comes from TEC, not the Diocese), you'll find a link to the form [here](#).**

#### Pastoral Care:

**From Bishop Susan: More and more of our hospitals are now not permitting any clergy to come into the hospital. Even those who are dying may not have a family member with them. You can still lead Prayers at the Time of Death, or other prayers for that matter, telephonically. The rubrics do not require you to be present. If you haven't yet memorized those prayers, found on page 462 in the Book of Common Prayer, now is the time to do so.**

Having now had multiple clergy with a positive test for COVID19, how can we be particularly of service now that we have low or no risk for (re)infection, particularly for hospitals, funerals, etc. ? What documentation, if any, can or should we get in order to be in the best position to help now or in the future? What might we need to consider to serve and minimize risk to our families? **We applaud your desire to be of assistance. We will consult with those with expertise in infectious disease protocols to get their guidance on this. Perhaps one option would be to be supportive over the phone rather than physically present. This virus is new enough that the experts' assessment of guidance continues to evolve. Please be patient and in the meantime, serve in the ways that you can. One avenue you might consider, though, is this. We have heard from colleagues elsewhere that the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education is looking for chaplains or clergy volunteers who would be willing to offer Telechaplancy services, either by phone or teleconference, to help fill in the gaps when we can't be present in hospitals and nursing homes. This is the sign-up form. It might be a beautiful ministry for our retired clergy, who have such gifts and would so wish they could help without being put at undue risk.**

<https://form.jotform.com/clarkacpe/telechaplancy-volunteer-form>

Similarly, what is the status of the Church in NYC and other hotspots? Just as healthcare workers are traveling to NYC to help, what are the needs of Churches, hospital chaplains, etc? **We will follow the guidance of the Diocese of New York as to whether or not clergy or lay professionals are needed to augment their people. As of now, they have not requested such assistance.**

How can we find out who the Episcopal Chaplains are at our local and regional hospitals? **We are gathering that information. There are also Episcopal chaplains at several of our retirement communities. We know of only a few, but we are also aware that there are lay Episcopal chaplains that aren't on our radar screen – if you know of any, let us know!**

*Questions and guidance from Mr. Stephen Christiansen, Funeral Director at Hill and Wood Funeral Homes in the Charlottesville area and from the Rev. David Niemeyer, Rector of St. Mark's Richmond and an experienced Marriage and Family Therapist:*

Have you had a funeral service where the service is repeated to accommodate more than ten people. For example one service at 2 pm and one at 3:30 pm with a different sets of people from the same family? **We have not. Some funeral homes might accommodate such a request, but we would consider it a risky practice and would strongly discourage it.**

Are you saying there's a requirement for embalming? For cremation? **At this point, the CDC is not saying that funeral homes cannot do embalming. There are protocols outlined for the embalming of those who have died from complications of COVID-19. There are also protocols for cremation.**

If the family would like to wait to have a service after the restrictions on numbers are lifted, is that possible? **It's a question, to be blunt, of capacity. There are limits to the numbers of deceased persons**

we can accommodate in our funeral homes which are among the larger ones in the area. Smaller, more rural funeral homes may have even less capacity. We would prefer to inter as soon as is feasible.

[SIDEBAR from Bishop Susan: I expect many of our parishes would be a holy place of repose for remains of the deceased until such time as the restrictions are lifted, if that is the bereaved family's wish.]

How have the protocols changed for you if the deceased has died from COVID-19 related complications? We can only attend to their remains one at a time. That slows things down a bit. The family is not permitted to come to view their loved one because they are required to quarantine. It's difficult. We could use the support of the clergy to help these folks understand, if this happens in one of your parishes. We do expect that there will be an increase in the number of deaths, sadly, so please do help us help your people.

This is the time to touch base with your local funeral directors, if you do not already have a relationship.

I have a parishioner who is dying from cancer (likely in next 2 months) should I start contacting a funeral home now to start discussing arrangements? It would probably be a wise thing to gently and lovingly guide them in that direction. That said, we don't know what the rules and restrictions might be two months from now, so you might also help them understand that what they plan today might not necessarily be how things need to go when the parishioner dies.

Often there's a delay between death and the ability to return remains to the family. Do we need to prep the family about a time lag? At this point, the time lag doesn't seem any worse than it had been prior to the pandemic.

Guidance from David+ (a condensed version of David's fine words):

I've been asked to cover several areas of concern. The first is how to talk to congregations and families. Death is always a difficult subject. We're considered to be professionals, but we're in a very different time with different circumstances. Those fears that grow and rise about death are intensified now that the projections are climbing.

How do we have difficult conversations about death before it happens?

Despite Rom 6:23, we still have difficulty because mortality is a tough thing to face. I tend to move away from general statements "it was God's will" to acknowledge that death is indeed a part of life and a path to eternal life. Emotions run high and intense, especially in the preparation time. There is a painful finality to the event of death. Recognize too that family doesn't want to have theology in the emergency room. We need to allow the conversation to unfold as it can in whatever venue we can do that, offering hope and support. One of the things we as clergy tend to do is to theologize. At that moment of death, they want practical points. Be good listeners. Meet them where they are. Break the ice: lead by the example of difficult conversations in our own lives. It's useful to consider the framing and language of the conversation – use phrase like "this time in the life cycle" rather than "end of life."

We know that life continues after death. Jesus shares his plan for life after death with his followers. But it still hurts. Grief is real. Note that cultures may differ in having these discussions. Pay special attention to that. Try to offer encouragement, if possible, to recognize death as a step of life.

For us as clergy, it's hard, even though we consider ourselves professionals. We are as susceptible to emotions about death as priests as anyone. Use a spiritual director, a colleague group, a therapist. We strengthen ourselves so we can strengthen others. Anger is a part of others' responses – it's normal and it's not about us. Try to normalize it. We're going to be facing more and more death so self-care is critically important. We have to take care of ourselves.

Some useful resources cited by David+ include Monica Goldrick's [The Expanded Family Life Cycle](#), Ira Byock's [Dying Well](#), Atul Gawande's [What Matters In The End](#), plus [Five Wishes: fivewishes.org](#).

Would Bishop Brooke-Davidson please send us that closing prayer? See below:

**God of the present moment**

**God who in Jesus stills the storm and soothes the frantic heart;  
Bring us hope and courage as we work through this uncertainty.  
Bring hope that you will make us equal to whatever lies ahead  
Bring us courage to endure what cannot be avoided,  
For your will is health and wholeness and peace and joy;  
You are God, and we need you.**

*Adapted from New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 747*

**Bless, protect, comfort and inspire  
The clergy and leaders gathered here and across your Church.  
Give us your Word in the hour of our need.  
Give us the courage to do what we can do,  
The serenity to accept what we cannot do,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.**

**Give us the faith to know and to proclaim that:**

***Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,  
Nor things present, nor things to come,  
Nor powers, nor heights, nor depths  
Nor anything else in creation.  
Will be able to separate us  
From the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

*Romans 8:38-39*

**God be your comfort, your strength;  
God be your hope and support;  
God be your light and your way;**

**And the blessing of God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
Be upon you and remain with you, this day and forevermore.**

*Adapted from NZPB, p. 745*