

Bishop Scott Mayer suspends in-person worship services for next two weeks
For immediate release
March 14, 2020

Second Saturday in Lent

Yesterday I called my Aunt Flo in Lexington, Kentucky, to express best wishes as she celebrated her 92nd birthday. In the course of our conversation, she expressed her disappointment (hinting at disagreement) that she would not be able to receive her birthday blessing at the cathedral this Sunday. The cathedral has suspended in-person worship services in order to join the effort to slow down the spread of the coronavirus.

Our conversation reminded me of the occasional need to cancel services due to ice storms in the Northwest Texas Panhandle. We have learned that if we communicate that the priest will be celebrating the Holy Eucharist, “but please stay off the ice, and please stay home,” faithful parishioners like my Aunt Flo will come anyway. So, we’ve learned to cancel services.

That is one reason, in consultation with the clergy of the diocese and the president of the Standing Committee, I am asking each congregation to suspend in-person worship services, and for each of you to worship with us from your homes for the next two Sundays, after which we will evaluate.

I am not requiring you to cancel every event on your campuses. Experts are recommending no gatherings of more than ten people, so I am asking for congregational leaders to use good judgment regarding small gatherings.

Finally, it is important for the Church to model responsibility during this very serious moment. It is going to take all of us to slow the spread of this virus – which will save lives.

The Bishop of Lexington, Mark Van Koevering, has made a profound observation – and yes, with reluctance Aunt Flo agrees with him (She loves Bishop Mark.) Bishop Van Koevering writes, “Our journey through the season of Lent gives us a unique lens in which to address this challenge. It is a time of self-sacrifice and exploration so that we might open ourselves to God’s presence in our lives in new and wondrous ways. Therefore, I invite you to practice a LENTEN FAST from public

worship ... for the next two weeks, as an act of love toward your neighbor, especially the elderly and vulnerable.”

The love of neighbor needs to be our guide in this moment. In a time of crisis, we need community. This particular crisis has the effect of separating us, so we need to find creative ways of being in community. This Sunday the diocese will offer Eucharist through Facebook Live. You can find more information and download the service leaflet at

<https://episcopaldiocesefortworth.org/diocese-to-offer-online-worship-each-sunday/>

This service is offered to supplement, not replace, online services your congregation may be offering.

And let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

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