



EPISTLE

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Greenville, Ohio

Helping all people find a connection to God's community.

May, 2020

CHANGE?

A Statement of Mission



As Episcopalians in the
Diocese of Southern Ohio,
we commit to:

† Know the common story

Deut. 11:18-21

† Proclaim our common
faith

Matt. 28:19-20

† Pray our common prayer

1 Thess. 5:16-19

† Drink the common cup

Mark 10:38

† Serve the common good

Matt. 25:37-40

In the name of our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is our common
ministry.

There's an old joke you'll probably recognize. "How many Episcopalians does it take to change a light bulb?" The answer: "Change?" There are a lot of variations to it, but the premise remains the same. As a group, we're resistant to change.

When you think about it, it seems a bit odd. The only real constant in life is that it constantly changes. Sure, we have our habits, and we repeat a lot of things without really thinking about them. But insert a slight change, and suddenly everything seems different.

I'm often slightly amused when someone is asked to lead something they've been a part of for years. I have seen it happen when someone is asked to lead something as familiar as The Lord's Prayer. Suddenly, in the middle of it, the mind goes blank and the tongue forgets how to speak. If you don't think it happens, let me know. I'll put you on the leadership list. At the top. It's why I keep a book in front of me while leading worship.

It has been about six weeks since we last met together. It will be a few more until we can, but even then there will be changes. Not so much in the words we say, but in how we do some of the things we've often taken for granted. And perhaps we won't even take them for granted anymore, having spent much time without them.

When Paul writes to the church in Corinth, he tells them again about the resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15). He describes a mystery that will affect not only those who have died, but also those who remain alive. "We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. . . ." (15:51ff)

Paul describes how the mortal body must be changed into an immortal one, an instantaneous event that God will cause to happen so that we can live forever through Christ with God. We won't have time to ask that venerable Episcopal question, "Change?" I have a pretty good idea we won't complain.

While we go through some of the changes needed to help us come back together, my hope is that it won't feel like it will take an act of God to make them happen. After all, this is the season of new life, the days we celebrate resurrection. As we've witnessed these past few weeks, and will continue to see in the months ahead, God doesn't change the world to save us. God changes us in order to save the world. May we be changed into witnesses of new life—of resurrection—as we continue the journey ahead.

—Wayne+

WHILE WE DISTANCE OURSELVES . . .

Gail and Gary Benesh arranged with Mark Davis at Eikenberry's to prepare box lunches for those who come to the Grace Resurrection Community Center. Our turn to provide lunch was Wednesday, April 29. The lunches were prepared and taken to GRCC, and distributed by GRCC staff. Thank you, Gail, Gary, and Mark and employees at Eikenberry's!

If you were keeping up with Lent Madness, you know that Harriet Tubman won the Golden Halo award on Wednesday of Holy Week.

The Outreach Commission arranged to provide two Easter dinners for needy families in our area. The dinners were prepared by Eikenberry's. If you would like to contribute to the expense of the dinners, you can send a check to the church office, with "Easter dinner" on the memo line.

Parish expenses continue while we wait to reopen. Mail and phone messages are checked regularly, as is the church building. Pledges and contributions can be sent to the church office at 201 S. Broadway, Greenville, 45331.

As we anticipate coming together again, several members of St. Paul's have been working on sewing face masks for us to use. Our thanks to Marty Davis, Mara Cox, Nora Mahoney, Joan Mote, and Marlene Harvey for volunteering your time and sewing skills to help us stay safe!

New issues of Forward Day by Day are here. To pick one up, please call ahead to arrange a time. If you have a key to the church building, copies are in the usual place on the lounge table.

Those new plantings in our church garden have begun to bud, and will be showing us their new life when we return.

The church office will begin to reopen the week of May 4. While we continue to practice social distancing, physical interaction will be limited, but available as needed. Face masks are available to those who do not have one. Please call ahead to ensure Fr. Wayne is in the office or to make an appointment.

A Pastoral Letter to the diocese

April 19, 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

This is the second pastoral letter I have sent out since the coronavirus pandemic took center stage in our lives. "Pastoral letter" is a technical term in the Episcopal Church. It is an official message from a diocesan bishop to his or her people, which under normal circumstances would be read aloud at all Sunday services immediately following its publication. Obviously, we are not in normal times. Indeed, I am writing this letter to extend my request that you continue to abstain from physically gathering for worship, and to thank you for abiding by this request.

My staff and I have been paying close attention to our governor's directives, and I am aware that he has announced Phase 1 of a return to business as usual, beginning on May 1. This includes permission for religious gatherings, assuming adherence to social distancing. I appreciate that permission but feel strongly that as a religious body the Diocese of Southern Ohio must go the extra mile to take every measure not to spread COVID19. We must make sacrifices to obey Christ's command to love our neighbor and take every precaution not to infect others unknowingly. So, as of May 1 (unless Governor DeWine decides to postpone Phase 1, in which case I will postpone the relaxation of this restriction as well) I will permit live-streaming or pre-recorded streaming of church services from the interior of our church buildings, with a maximum of five people physically distant from one another (for instance, one officiant, one or two readers, a musician, and a technician). Masks must be worn. Hand sanitizer or handwashing must be used frequently.

I am continuing my directive to limit worship to Morning Prayer or one of the other Daily Offices. I understand the hardship of fasting from the eucharist, as I am undergoing that fast myself. But as my fellow bishop, Prince Singh of the Diocese of Rochester, said last week, our fundamental sacrament is the word of God, and Jesus himself, walking beside us. So let us use this time to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" God's holy word in scripture, prayer, and give generously to those less fortunate than ourselves (BCP, p.236).

I wish to acknowledge several of many painful cancellations in the Episcopal church, the worldwide Anglican Communion, and locally in our diocese: 1) EYE (Episcopal Youth Event); this summer; (2) the Lambeth Conference, this summer; (3) summer camp programs at Procter, this summer.

It is hard, but we will come through this stronger.

Please be assured of my prayers, and my pride in you for your witness in so many ways to the resurrection of our Lord.

Easter blessings,

+Tom

WORKING TO REDEFINE “NORMAL”

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about anticipated changes we expect to experience when we come together again. Since then, I've been listening to the advice of medical experts at the CDC and NAIAD, the two leading authorities on illness and contagions. While there's still much to be learned, initial evidence shows that what we've been doing is helping us stay safe and uninfected by the coronavirus.

As the State of Ohio considers how to best, and gradually reopen, one effect of the coronavirus is that we will continue to be wary of the unknown presence of the virus in those who do not and may never exhibit symptoms. Some precautions will remain as we begin to learn what our new normal will be.

As many of you know, I've asked for the help of parishioners who sew to help provide face masks for our use. Materials have been purchased and divided among them, and the work is in process. These face masks are reusable, and the hope is that parishioners will take them home for washing, then remember to bring them back to wear when we meet for any purpose. Many companies have begun offering masks for sale online. These companies have retooled their own processes to keep employees at work making masks instead of clothing.

I have received some information from the NAIAD, the governmental organization headed by Dr. Anthony Fauci. I asked for specific information regarding the coronavirus and our communion elements, particularly the effect of silver and gold chalices and fortified wine upon the virus. I've learned that no such tests have been completed to date, although they continue in laboratory settings across the country. I don't know if I'll receive any more information outside of published reports.

So, here's what I anticipate as we gradually resume public worship and meetings:

1. Our bishop has given the go-ahead for online virtual services to be broadcast from the church buildings after May 1. He has also suggested the presence of a few others to assist, with the requirement that everyone wear a mask and maintain current social distancing advice. This means that you may not be watching the morning service “live from Harrison Avenue,” but may see it broadcast from in front of our altar. The service will continue to be Morning Prayer until we can come together to celebrate Holy Eucharist again. How we add a few other persons will be determined somewhat by the availability of necessary equipment.
2. If we are given the green light to begin in-person worship again in May, we will need to observe some guidelines. Everyone present must wear a face mask, and must continue to maintain social distancing advisories. Those in attendance on March 15 did the distancing during the peace. This may mean sitting a bit further apart, as singing hymns and speaking responses may spread aerosol particles that those within close range could receive on exposed skin and through the eyes. We will try to have hand sanitizers available, but many already carry them. Please try to use one that is not heavily scented. The alcohol content of the sanitizer itself can induce a mild asthma attack in some vulnerable persons.
3. Holy Communion will be distributed in one kind only for the near future, that being the bread. A small portion of wine must be consecrated during the Great Thanksgiving, but it will be returned to the earth after worship is ended. We will not come to the altar rail at first,

but will receive the bread standing in front of the choir steps, then turning to the side aisles to return to the pews. This will help us maintain some social distancing.

4. Since it's not possible to drink a beverage or eat a snack while wearing a face mask, coffee hour will continue to be suspended until further notice. Gathering in close proximity and having to move masks aside can easily undo all our other attempts to stop the spread of this virus. We can speak to each other and converse while being a bit further apart in the nave and lounge, or as weather permits, in our recently redone garden areas.

If we read the history of the 1918 flu pandemic, we will learn that initial distancing and other precautionary measures helped stem the spread of the disease. However, that same history tells us that the mass celebrations of the end of World War I brought thousands of folks together, resulting in the rapid spread of influenza in the general population. While our hope is that continuing some precautions will prevent new infections of COVID-19, we really won't know what will happen until after a few weeks have passed. We have one chance to get this right.

Each of us has a responsibility to prevent the spread of illness. It's actually part of our baptismal vows, which we will repeat again whenever we come together for the first time. We promise, with God's help, to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself." One of the best ways we've been able to show our love for our neighbor and for ourselves these past weeks has been to help stop the spread of this virus. Hopefully, we've also taken some notice of the more important things in our lives, and can continue on while leaving behind many of the things that hinder our living into the fulness of God's abundance.

And when we are able to meet together again, loving our neighbor means that if we feel ill, and especially have a fever, cough, and congestion, we stay home. It also means that if we don't want to wear a mask, we stay apart from others. Services can and will be halted if we can't follow some simple, if uncomfortable guidelines. One of the ways Jesus taught us that we show our relationship with God is in how we show our care for one another. As we can, let us continue to be that example of God's love.

Peace.

--Wayne+

CONTACT INFORMATION

To contact Fr. Wayne, please call the church office at 937-548-5575 and leave a message if there is no answer. You may also call him at home at 937-459-4906.

Please note the following changes in email addresses. These are new and are tied to our new website, which is in progress:

Fr. Wayne	WRollins@stpaulsgreenville.org
Church	Office@stpaulsgreenville.org
Website	www.stpaulsgreenville.org

These new emails will be phased in over the next several weeks. Difficulties with present email, resulting in the inability of some to receive them, will hopefully disappear. They will be tested. This will also separate Fr. Wayne's work emails from his personal account. Our present website, www.episcopalchurchgreenville.com, is infected with malware and is being taken down. To avoid infecting our new site, all files and pictures will be new, and not copied from the old site.

***During this time of uncertainty and waiting, here are some helpful internet sites
for worship and inspiration***

Our live-stream services are here

www.facebook.com/episcopalgreenvilleohio

For Diocese of Southern Ohio events and offerings

www.diosohio.org

then click on the "Doing church" during COVID-19 banner

For Daily Offices and other meditations

www.missionstclare.org

prayer.forwardmovement.org

dailyooffice.app

<https://dailyooffice.wordpress.com/>

for the Daily Office in Quarantine

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