



# THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

## STANDING COMMITTEE

March 16, 2020

Dear Faithful People of the Diocese of South Carolina,

On behalf of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina, I write to address what has come to be an inevitable decision regarding COVID-19. In consideration of the most vulnerable among us and under the newest recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control, it is our judgment that all public worship services in the Diocese of South Carolina should be suspended until the end of the month of March. In addition to public worship services, we are requesting that all in-person parish meetings and gatherings in the Diocese of South Carolina also be suspended until the end of the month of March. We will be providing regular updates as the situation unfolds.

Your Standing Committee has made this decision in consultation with Archdeacon Callie Walpole, Bishop Henry Parsley, and various clergy and lay leaders in our congregations.

We must remember that our collective efforts are to minimize risk, love our neighbor, and continue to be the church. People need the church in times like these, but this is not the same thing as a hurricane. We are in a public health crisis. We continue to discourage all at-risk populations and anyone experiencing respiratory illness (or exhibiting any symptoms of respiratory illness) from leaving home.

During this time, flexible work hours should be given to all church employees remembering that no one is required to be physically present at work during this time, nor should anyone feel pressured into serving in a volunteer capacity.

The situation is changing before our very eyes, but we, the Body of Christ, remain open.

The suspension of public worship will create many challenges, but also opportunities for innovation in liturgy, pastoral care, and evangelism. Many of our congregations are in the process of planning or have already begun online worship, formation, and meetings. Pastoral strategies will need to be developed in each congregation and worshipping community to reach out to members during this time. On top of that, it is important to think about how each of us, in our own context, can serve the most vulnerable in our communities who are outside of our official membership.

A page has been added to the diocesan website dedicated to our response to the COVID-19 outbreak and to online offerings. Find it at this link: [episcopalchurchsc.org/covid19](https://episcopalchurchsc.org/covid19). All communications from diocesan leadership will be available on this webpage, as well as continuous updates on resources and information that may be helpful to churches throughout our diocese during this time.

As I said in [my letter of December 20, 2019](#), your Standing Committee, along with Archdeacon Callie Walpole and our dedicated diocesan staff, is charged to ensure that the ongoing work and ministry of the diocese continues not only to function, but to thrive.

*(continued)*



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The same goes for the ongoing work and ministry of the diocese, the search for our next bishop, or anything else that might come our way. COVID-19 will not defeat the spirit of the Diocese of South Carolina.

***A Prayer for All Those Affected by the Coronavirus***

*Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy.  
Sustain and support the anxious,  
be with those who care for the sick,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may find comfort knowing that  
nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

Faithfully yours,

The Reverend Canon Caleb J. Lee  
President of the Standing Committee