

# The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



December 11, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

In light of Governor Wolf's Covid-19 mitigation order issued late this week, I am again asking all congregations in the diocese to suspend public worship until further notice. As we did earlier in the year, the celebration of weekly Eucharist and/or Morning Prayer should continue with *no more than four persons* in attendance, *including the celebrant or officiant*. I encourage you to live-stream your worship whenever possible.

We have returned to a place we wish we could have avoided. The number of Covid-19 cases in our region far exceeds the worst days of last spring and summer. With this increase in illness, we are also seeing a dramatic spike in hospitalizations, and sadly, even deaths. I know the governor's order specifically exempts houses of worship. However, as followers of Jesus, we are never exempt from our baptismal vow *to love our neighbors as ourselves*, to care for them and preserve their lives. The risk to us all is once again great, and we must do what we can to protect each other and those around us.

I know this is very sudden notice, and some parishes may need time to make adjustments through this Sunday. Please be sure these precautions are in place by the fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20. And while I know some congregations have already announced suspensions into January, I am reluctant to specify any end date for this advisory, given the uncertainty we again face during this phase of the pandemic. The virus is not letting us know when it will cease its business. We must be as patient as we need to be to ensure its defeat.

In this season of hope, we have reason to hope. There is a vaccine coming, a cause for hope. But more hopeful and joyful still is the hope we have in Christ. This weekend, as we mark Gaudete Sunday, let's put our trust once again in Jesus our merciful Savior, have confidence in God's way with us, and take to heart the exhortation of Saint Paul: *Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, Rejoice. Do not be anxious, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:4-7).*

Stay safe and well, beloved. You are always in my prayers.

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dorsey", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.  
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh