



Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:18-19

Clericus Summary Letter from the Bishop

Tuesday, April 28

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Thank you for joining in on the Diocesan Clericus call. I thank God for you and the work that you are doing to care for God's people. Your faithfulness bears witness to the risen Christ. Know that I pray daily for each one of you.

We are, all of us, are dealing with the challenge of living with COVID-19: the uncertainty, the fear, the loss and the grief. Still, I am confident that God is with us in this time and on this journey; I know that God is calling us, in this adaptive moment, to reimagine, renew, and recommit to being the Body of Christ in the world. Even though we may not see the road in front of us, we are being called to make the next faithful step. Even when we find ourselves longing like the Israelites, for that which feels familiar and predictable, we keep walking because we know that God is faithful and will lead us to streams of living water.

I already have seen the fruits of your faithfulness. Clergy and lay leaders across the Episcopal Church in Colorado are responding to this new divine call with creativity, renewed vision, and an outpouring of generosity. While our common life looks dramatically different than it did this time last year, we are discerning together the new thing that God is doing, right here and right now. We are not being asked to re-create what was, but to co-create the future of the Episcopal Church in Colorado.

As we look towards the future, the Rev. Canon Carl Andrews (Disaster Director for the Episcopal Church in Colorado), the Rev. Canon Alex Dyer (Canon to the Ordinary), our Office of the Bishop staff, and I are working with advisors and evaluating our changing reality in real time. We are gleaning from the work of others and adapting it to fit our unique context in Colorado. I am grateful for the thoughtful work of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and the House of Bishops who provided information and insight for our Clericus presentation on how the Church will live with COVID-19.

We found the concept of understanding ourselves as living in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world, particularly helpful. And recognizing that we as leaders cannot provide certainty, we acknowledge that we can work together to bring Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Agility to our leadership and how we embody the Gospel, especially regarding the gathering of the faithful in-person.

Because we are still learning about the particularities of the Novel Coronavirus, the process of gathering and opening our buildings will be gradual. Together we will move through seasons that will bring us to our goal. We have adopted the language of "seasons" to emphasize that while we will look to our government for information and guidance, we will move at a more cautious pace that accounts for our most vulnerable members. The language of seasons also reminds us that we are a seasonal church; and our common life is guided by our liturgical seasons which vary in length, practice, and emphasis.

Generally, the Episcopal Church in Colorado will be at least ten to fourteen days behind our state and local government's recommendations. We have chosen this pace so that we might determine the safety and effectiveness of new guidelines. Our primary concern is caring for and protecting the health of all those our community.

This first season, the season of staying at home and "sheltering in Grace" is still in effect and will be until the end of May. We are encouraging congregations to continue meeting virtually and we are asking clergy to avoid broadcasting from church buildings. We are requesting that church staff continue to work from home and that in-person pastoral visits be avoided. Episcopal Relief and Development has asked all church leaders to model both wearing masks and social distancing in worship services done outside the home as these practices significantly reduce the spread of contagion.

Because of our current circumstance, I have elected to cancel our scheduled regional confirmation services. I am exploring options for connecting virtually with confirmands and possible virtual visitations with congregations and will be in communication with church leaders as plans coalesce. In addition, Cathedral Ridge has canceled this year's summer camps and the Diocesan Clergy Retreat (May 4-6) has been reconfigured as an online offering featuring the Rt. Rev. Andy Doyle, Bishop of the Diocese of Texas. These changes, while disappointing, exercise necessary caution for the future health of our church in Season I.

Like many of you, I dreamed that one day we would all join together around our altars in triumph and joy to keep the feast. But living with COVID-19, has taught us that testing, treatment, and community spread data varies widely within our diocese. And because our congregations and buildings vary in size and shape, we do not expect that we will be able to resume in-person worship all at once. I invite each congregation to work with Canon Alex and Canon Carl to create a safety and preparedness plan, evaluate local data, and identify the best time to move into Season II.

And while previous communications used the language of "approval" in connection with canonical requirements, I want to emphasize that this is not a demand for deference, but a request for collaboration. We want to be in conversation about protocols to ensure that we limit risk and liability while providing creative space and maintaining theological consistency. In every season, I ask our leaders to exercise caution and adhere to safety protocols, knowing that future outbreaks in congregations or communities will mean a return to stricter protocols for at least 14 days.

Moving forward, Season II will be characterized by continued mitigation. Pastoral visits may resume, but only by and to those who are not in high risk categories. Congregations may begin to open church offices where there is enough space for physical distancing. Congregations which have space large enough to allow for physical distancing may begin in-person worship for a small number of people. Congregations are invited to continue Morning Prayer via virtual worship and livestreaming, increasing the number in-person participants as the space safely allows. Please remember, most of us have an inaccurate perception of how much distance six feet of circumference actually entails, and it will be up to congregational leaders to define that space. Communities will also be asked to develop plans for how people will safely enter and exit the building.

In Season III, we anticipate a lifting of physical distancing protocols with continued protection. Church offices can be open during this season. Worship and meetings for all congregations may resume and we encourage all congregations to continue providing virtual options for those who cannot physically attend. As this season progresses, we hope to resume Holy Eucharist, however, it will not be the Holy Eucharist we are used to. New safety protocols will have to be observed.

Season IV will be the season that shapes our future together. This season when we will look back over this time to see what lessons we have learned and discern the next steps on the path of our new reality. We will

be the Episcopal Church in Colorado; and we will be a different church.

It is my hope that we will continue to:

- Build and improve platforms for livestreaming and uploading worship services
- Maintain opportunities for online gathering and learning
- Provide online access for meetings and programs in real time
- Meet the challenges of our world with agility and adaptability
- Reach out with generosity and compassion to those who have been devastated

As we move forward in faith, Canon Carl and Canon Alex are working on safe protocols and procedures for baptisms, weddings, and funerals as we adapt to each season and to our changing circumstances. We will provide them for you as soon as we can. Please be in touch with them or me with any questions or concerns you might have.

May God bless you and keep you.

Faithfully,

Bishop Kym Lucas
The Episcopal Church in Colorado