



The Episcopal
Diocese of San Joaquin
The Central Third of California

April 15, 2020

Sisters and Brothers of The Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin,
Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!

At the time of writing this correspondence, there have been over 2,000,000 cases of COVID-19 reported worldwide and over 130,000 deaths. In the US, there have been well over 600,000 cases reported and over 26,000 deaths. These are staggering, shocking and sobering numbers. I know you are aware of these same numbers as we are perpetually confronted by them through our 24 hour news cycles. Due to the fact that we are aware of these mounting numbers, each day, each moment, it is perhaps far too easy not to look beyond the numbers into the deeper reality they represent. Family members, loved ones, mothers, fathers, grandparents, young and old alike, are no longer with us due to this insidious pandemic. And the numbers of those struggling with the virus and who will struggle, is incomprehensible. Again, in our worldwide human community, these are our family members and our loved ones about whom I write and for whom we continue to pray.

A month ago, in consultation with diocesan leaders, I suspended public worship and public gatherings until April 20. This was an extremely difficult decision at the time, upon reflection, it was, I believe, one of the most important decisions ever made during and for the life of EDSJ. Even though there is evidence that the trajectory of COVID-19 is beginning “to flatten” in particular parts of the US and globally, I would suggest we run an extreme risk of placing one another in harm’s way by lifting our suspensions prematurely. As we have heard together, when and where a “flattening” has occurred, it is clear that our sheltering-in-place measures, washing hands routines and wearing masks efforts have contributed substantially to any flattening phenomenon. **As a result of our experience over the last month and our continued responsibility for one another, again, after consultation with diocesan leaders, we will further our suspension of public worship and public gatherings until May 24.**

This decision remains difficult however I pray time will confirm it is very much the right decision, the faithful decision, the decision which comes as a result of looking beyond the numbers to lives of family members and loved ones.

I believe, Sisters and Brothers of EDSJ, we are being redefined by this pandemic, moreover, I believe we are exercising a faith during these challenging days which will mark one of the most extraordinary time in our lives.

Please continue to pray for one another. Please continue to reach out to one another. Please continue to do the things for yourself (social distancing, washing hands, wearing masks) which is the most faithful and loving way of taking care of one another. This is how we express and reflect the resurrection hope which is God's gift to all of God's People.

Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!

You remain in my daily prayers

Easter Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a small cross followed by a stylized, cursive letter 'D' that loops around and ends with a flourish.

+David