



[Mother Tracy Wells Miller](#)  
General Discussion | 213 Participants

This message just went out to all the clergy in the diocese and I thought it was worth sharing with all of you as well. Most notable is her recommendation to "fast from public face-to-face worship" at least through April 4. Thus, **although I originally said the decision to cancel worship services was only for March 15, it now applies also to March 22 and March 29.**

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Dear Friends in Christ,

As the situation continues to unfold with the Coronavirus, our goals will be to continue to maintain connection, stay informed, and exercise personal responsibility and leadership. In the Santa Clara Valley Deanery, a very recent mandate from the Santa Clara County Public Health Department again tightened the restrictions on gatherings. Fortunately, I had already issued a strong recommendation that the Deanery move to virtual worship, and I reiterated that this morning. Most have complied at this point.

With more information coming from Santa Cruz County and Monterey County, **I strongly recommend that beginning next Sunday, March 22, our parishes in the Monterey Deanery, joining the recommendation for the Santa Clara Valley Deanery, move to virtual or other creative forms of worship, and fast from public face-to-face worship gatherings.** This allows you time to let your parishes know and work out your plans. We have many folks who are in the "at-risk" population, and we all need to protect them.

John Plocher [john.plocher@gmail.com](mailto:john.plocher@gmail.com) has offered to assist any parish that needs assistance with setting that up. In the Monterey Deanery, Austin Leininger+ of Calvary, Santa Cruz is live streaming, and Kristine Johnson+ of St. Mary's-by-the-

sea, Pacific Grove is working on that as well, as are others. Elrond Lawrence of Sargent House will continue to post links to live streaming around the diocese as the information is sent to him.

I would anticipate that we should plan to have these forms of worship in place through April 4<sup>th</sup>. However, I have been advised that this could easily extend through Holy Week. Terry Gleeson+ is beginning to think creatively about that, so I anticipate we will all be able to contribute and help each other to find ways to have a special Holy Week.

For the San Luis Obispo Deanery, the basic good practices iterated before remain in place. You may however, want to discuss alternative forms of worship with your leaders sooner rather than later.

I have rescheduled the Deacon's Retreat for May 30<sup>th</sup>. I am continuing my visitation schedule, and I anticipate finding creative ways of doing that virtually, when there are not confirmations, receptions or reaffirmations. This Tuesday, I will record a video for our diocese as a way of connecting us and encouraging us during this very Lenten experience.

Meanwhile, I am making virtual plans for the Blessing of Oils Service and Renewal of Vows on April 1<sup>st</sup>. I'll let you know how we will do this very soon.

A very few have wondered about why I didn't issue a mandate closing everyone down, as our neighboring diocese to the north did that. Certainly that would have been easy for me and even for you, but I felt it inappropriate as the Pastoral Leader of our diocese. Unlike more urban dioceses, the same action does not fit all of our settings in El Camino Real; the situation in Santa Clara Valley Deanery has been unfolding very differently from other places in our diocese, and I believe it is appropriate for you to exercise good leadership in your context. By Canon, it is my responsibility to ensure that worship continues, and this is the way that it happens

best, in my mind. I do believe, over the long haul, our leadership together is strengthened by our approach during this time.

Please be mindful of the outside groups who use your space. It is important to have honest conversation with leaders from other denominations with whom you share space so that there is agreement about gatherings and basic guidelines for dealing with health concerns. With AA groups, it is important to consider limiting the groups to one space that can be wiped down in-between meetings. Please avoid canceling an AA meeting, as this meeting may be more important than anything else in a person's life at that time, yet be sure that basic guidelines are being followed.

If you are serving meals to those who are hungry, please consider packing bag lunches, using to-go boxes, etc. Be sure that those preparing the meals take precautions by using gloves and cleaning surfaces frequently.

Remember that we cannot manage the Coronavirus; we can only lead through it and work to manage the anxiety around it. Please don't hesitate to call with questions or concerns, or just to talk it through. I've had several conversations with many of you over the past three days, and I deeply appreciate both the challenge of this, and the creative ways in which you are engaging this crisis—and finding hope and opportunity.

Grateful for all you do and are,

+Lucinda

*The Right Rev. Lucinda Ashby*

Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real

“The glory of God is the human person wholly alive.” Irenaeus of Lyons (2<sup>nd</sup> Century)