



# Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

Dear Holy Trinity Family:

It has been a challenging time for everyone as our normal way of living is now transforming into something few could imagine as we began 2020. Though unusual changes are taking place around us, we need to be reassured that God is present in our lives and we will move beyond this moment. I think so often these days of my favorite passage from John's Gospel: "In this world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."

With this in mind I need to share Bishop Skirving's letter of today announcing that all public worship will be cancelled through the end of April. This means Holy Week and Easter as well as our Tuesday Eucharist and Healing service.

I will be working on alternative ways we can enrich our spiritual lives over the next five weeks. Our Palm Sunday and Easter programs will be emailed to you before these days occur and copies will be available in the sanctuary. I will also be communicating my sermons either in written form or by video.

Please note that Holy Trinity Church will be open on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 - 11:30 and on Sundays from 9:00 - 11 am for private prayer and meditation. Social distancing is a must and there are guidelines posted on the door. I have written a special prayer for this time which you can find on our website and Facebook. I am available at anytime for questions and concerns.

As we enter the final weeks of Lent and the dramatic days of Holy Week and Easter we can take comfort in Christ's love for us and his victory over evil and death!

Faithfully

Ron Abrams  
Priest in Charge



# The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

The Right Reverend Robert S. Skirving, Bishop

Monday, March 23, 2020

Jesus said to Thomas, 'Have you believed because you have seen me?  
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'  
(John 20:29, NRSV)

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we draw closer to the celebrations of the Easter season and I have contemplated the decisions that we must make, the story of the encounter between Thomas and our risen Lord Jesus has found its way into my heart. Normally shared publicly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, this passage from John's gospel portrays the challenge faced by Thomas in accepting the word of the other disciples, when they tell him "We have seen the Lord." Thomas needed to see Jesus for himself and to touch his wounds. Too often, we are critical of Thomas, labeling him as doubting. In reality, most of us need to see for ourselves before we can "believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God." (verse 31)

Sadly, our celebrations of Holy Week and Easter Day will not include seeing one another in the usual ways, nor embracing one another in person. With this letter, I am directing that the suspension of public worship continue in every congregation of the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina through the end of April 2020. There are to be no exceptions. The creativity and collaboration that I am witnessing across our Diocese will need to be taken even further, as we find new ways to worship during Holy Week and the early part of the Easter season. I will collaborate with our clergy and churchwardens to find ways of addressing the challenges ahead, and I will be available to support the leaders of each congregation in making necessary decisions.

Please note that this direction applies only to public worship. Leaders of the congregations of our Diocese are charged with making responsible decisions for all other dimensions of life and ministry in their own communities. In all cases, we are to comply with the requirements of local, civic and federal authorities in order to help slow the spread of infection. Diocesan House staff will work with ministry leaders to modify, reschedule, or cancel all Diocesan events planned to take place during the month of April.

This Holy Week and Easter season, we might look to Thomas for our inspiration, particularly as we can neither see nor embrace one another in person. May God's Holy Spirit lead us to seek not our own needs, but the needs of those who suffer most deeply as a result of the pandemic brought by COVID-19. May our Easter proclamation of God's love be expressed in our love for one another and for all of our neighbors.

Yours in Christ,

*Robert S. Skirving*

Post Office Box 1336 Kinston, North Carolina 28503

Telephone 252-522-0885 Facsimile 252-523-5272 [www.diocese-eastcarolina.org](http://www.diocese-eastcarolina.org)