From Canon Michael Barlowe, Executive Officer of the General Convention:

It's inspiring that worship is still going on via the internet, despite the bans on public gatherings. The most important thing right now is the health of our people and our neighbors, so having the ability to worship over digital platforms has been a real blessing.

Senior church leadership is aware that there may be some anxiety about how to document attendance at such digital worship services, but our message is "Do not worry about this." Most congregations and dioceses will record the number and kind of worship (Morning Prayer, streamed Eucharist, etc.); and list the virtual attendance separately as "virtual attendance" or a similar designation, using whatever counting their digital media allows.

That's all that needs to be done right now. By the time we issue instructions for 2020's parochial and diocesan reporting, we will have more experience with this, and will have had time to consider, consult, and offer more specific guidance. We have time, as we all pray for an end to this pandemic.

In the meantime, I and my colleagues in the General Convention Office express our gratitude to the clergy and lay leaders who are looking for new ways to continue worship through remote technologies during this pandemic. The very fact that worship has continued under these unique circumstances -- and not the numbers themselves -- will be the real story of 2020.

With gratitude,

Michael Barlowe

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