



The Episcopal Diocese of Idaho

1858 W. Judith Lane

Boise, Idaho 83705

www.episcopalidaho.org

Phone (208) 345-4440 • Fax (208) 345-9735

Pastoral Directive from Bishop Brian Thom, November 19, 2020

By his order last Friday, November 13th, Governor Brad Little has returned the State of Idaho to Stage Two of the Idaho Rebounds COVID-19 precautions. Reasserting the necessity for proper distancing and sanitizing, the Stage Two order also limits the size of in-person gatherings to 10 people or less.

As was granted in last April's movement from Stage One to Stage Two, religious organizations are exempt from the current order as well. However, when Stage Two arrived on April 30th, the Diocese of Idaho continued its suspension of in-person worship, choosing an abundance of caution until the State was able to move to the safer Stage Three precautions. We hoped this would allow some congregations to re-open worship on Pentecost, June 3rd. Indeed, this option became possible when Governor Little moved Idaho up to Stage Three on May 28th. Over the last nineteen days, COVID-19 infections across our state have risen to over 1000 per day, far exceeding the statistics when the outbreak began. Hospitalizations are increasing exponentially. Regional hospitals are diverting normal admissions to larger Idaho or out-of-state hospitals; elective surgeries are being postponed.

Given the cascading manner of this pandemic —from infection to hospitalization to infection of healthcare workers to reduced workforce to overcrowded/understaffed hospitals to potential crisis triage - we must join the effort to keep as many people as safe as possible.

Therefore, I am suspending in-person worship within the parish buildings of the Diocese of Idaho immediately. Production of online worship services may continue. Outdoor worship gatherings may continue with my specific permission. This Pastoral Directive will remain in effect until Idaho moves up again to the Stage Three level of infections and precautionary measures.

I will be working with the Cathedral and other partners to create Advent and Christmas online worship.

Last spring, we wondered how we could give up Easter worship. Now, certainly, Thanksgiving and Christmas will be caught up in these necessary precautions. However, just as we proclaimed this past Annual Convention weekend that we are a Eucharistic People, we can certainly remain a Grateful and Incarnational People, while seeking alternative ways to affirm the love of God and family in safer and creative celebrations.

Restrict/reduce your social activities.

Wear a mask whenever you leave your home.

Return to sanitizing common surfaces at home and work.

+ Brian Thom
VIII Idaho

