



March 25, 2020

Greetings friends,

I pray you are finding moments of peace in the midst of an anxious season. I am writing today to update you regarding in-person worship services at Christ Episcopal Church (CEC) over the next several weeks, as well as what the leadership of CEC will be doing to help us all keep in touch in this strange time. I am aware that not everyone at CEC has regular access to email, so this letter and the documents included with it will, I hope, allow us all to stay connected both to one another and to God as we continue to adapt to the ever-changing situation.

Let me begin with the question everyone is asking, “When do we get to come back to the church building?” You will notice, right off, that I phrased this question in a very particular way. I did not ask, “When do we get to come back to church?” because, as you all know, the church is far more than the building. While our beautiful, historic space at 78 Washington Street is a blessing to us, it is not “the church.” WE, along with our fellow Christ-followers, are the church. As we come together in Zoom video calls, via online streaming, over the phone, with text messages, or simply through prayers lifted up in our homes at the same time, we are the church gathered.

Sadly, we will need to continue to be the “church gathered” virtually for a while longer. The bishop’s, following guidance from medical professionals including the CDC, have strongly recommended we cancel all in-person worship services until at least May 10. I have met with the Vestry and we are in agreement. All in-person worship services at CEC, including both Sunday morning services and Tuesday Morning Prayer are cancelled through at least May 10. In addition, in response to Gov. Lamont’s recent Executive Order, “Stay Home, Stay Safe,” the church office and building will remain closed until at least May 10. This includes all group meetings regularly held at CEC.

As I’m sure you’ve calculated by now, this means we will not be gathering in-person for Holy Week or Easter this year. We along with Christ-followers around the world find ourselves, once again, in unfamiliar waters. I have been in conversation with fellow clergy from the SE Region, from across ECCT, and with the bishops regarding Holy Week and Easter services. As I write, plans are being discussed as to how ECCT can best support congregations with additional online service options during Holy Week. Stay tuned for more details!

As to the “other” Sundays between now and when we are able to gather again in-person, I encourage you to continue to explore the online, streaming options. Not only those being offered by church in Connecticut, but those offered across the country and around the world. This is a unique opportunity for us to go for a visit to a church we might, otherwise, never have set foot in! I have included with this letter a list of a few churches that are live-streaming their Sunday services as well as a few online Morning Prayer options. In addition, ECCT is maintaining an on-going list of online service offerings which you can find by going to:

<https://bit.ly/ECCTLiveStreams>

While I have chosen not to live-stream a service from CEC at this point, I am going to be creating some online prayer and reflection videos that, I hope, will be both encouraging and comforting in this season. These videos will be available on CECs newly updated website beginning Sunday, March 29. You can access them by going

to <https://christchurchnorwich.org/> and then clicking on the Sermons link at the top of the page. I will be posting a new video every Sunday morning until we are able to gather again in-person.

While these online options will, I pray, allow us to continue to worship together, I know all of us are missing the opportunity we have always had to gather “in-person.” Those times were always about far more than formal liturgy, but were also about connecting to one another as the family of God. While we may be practicing physical distancing in order to slow the spread of COVID-19/Coronavirus, we need not practice spiritual distancing! As such, the Vestry and I are exploring ways to help us all stay connected during this time.

One of those ways is the implementation of a phone tree. A team, led by Debbie Kimball and Dawn Erardy, have created a phone tree of active parishioners who live in the area. If you’re on the phone tree list, there is an additional sheet in this mailing giving you details of who else is on your “branch” and how it works. Unfortunately, our database isn’t as reliable as it might be. If you did not receive a branch assignment sheet in this packet and want to be included, call Debbie at 860-889-3937 or Dawn at 860-213-5834 and they’ll get you added in!

Below you will find additional information that, I hope, will answer many of the other questions you may have at this time. If you do have a question that is not addressed in this letter or in the additional attachments, please contact me via phone or text at 573-268-6402 or via email at rector@cecnorwichct.org. You can also call the church office and leave a message, which either I or the wardens will respond to.

Know that you are in my and my family’s prayers. As many of you know, part of our “bedtime routine” with Henry is praying Compline each night. Every night we ask him, who do we need to pray for tonight and he regularly includes, “church” in his prayers. God has not left us; Christ is still risen and we are still resurrection people!

Blessing to you all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

The Rev. Stacey Kohl
rector@cecnorwichct.org
573-268-6402

Staying Connected Tips and Tricks:

Needs for pastoral visits or in pastoral emergency:

While in-person pastoral visits are not possible at this time due to social distancing requirements, I am still reachable for pastoral care via my cell phone, 573-268-6402. I can be reached by phone (leave a voicemail and I'll call you back ASAP) or text message. You can also contact your phone tree branch leader or the parish wardens directly if you can't reach me. Their information is included on the Phone Tree list. You can also call the parish office, 860-887-4249, and leave a voicemail if the need is not urgent as the office phone is being checked regularly.

Our website:

One benefit of the last few weeks has been that Stacey has finally been able to largely complete the updates to CEC's website! While the webpage can still be accessed via the old address, <https://cecnorwichct.org/>, the new address <https://christchurchnorwich.org/> will hopefully allow for easier access and more "web traffic" going forward. A special COVID-19/Coronavirus page has been added and can be accessed here, <https://christchurchnorwich.org/covid-19-updates/>. Check here for regular updates and links to helpful information during this season.

Emails:

If you are not on our email list (if you have not been receiving the "e-News" or our recent COVID-related updates), please subscribe here:

Our Facebook page:

Our Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/cecnorwichct/>. More short-form information, inspiration, connections to devotional resources, etc will be shared here.

Personal prayer at home

Please remember your CEC family and particularly our leadership in your daily prayers. If you don't already have a daily prayer pattern, try those on pages 137-141 of the Book of Common Prayer or those offered in Stacey's Sunday videos. If you don't own a Book of Common Prayer and need one, you can download this PDF version for free: <https://www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/book-of-common-prayer/book-of-common-prayer-2006.pdf> or contact Stacey directly and we will arrange to send you a physical copy from the church's stock.

Continue to make your financial contributions

We understand many people will be suffering economic hardship as businesses close. However, if you are able to continue to make your regular contributions to CEC it will help us meet our expenses and support our outreach ministries. You can mail checks to the church office (78 Washington Street, Norwich, CT 06360) or make a contribution online here <https://christchurchnorwich.org/give/>.

For very low-tech folks:

Unfortunately, in the present crisis things are changing so rapidly and we are having to adjust our plans so frequently that we cannot communicate these changes and updates effectively via postal mail. As a result, we must rely predominantly on email and web-based communications. We deeply regret that some folks may feel left out and doubly isolated—we wish there were other options. **If you do not have any capability to communicate via email**, please find a parishioner who does and ask them to be your CEC communications buddy and tell you about updates and changes.

Sunday morning online services:

- Trinity, New Haven; 9 a.m., <http://trinitynewhaven.org/>
- St. John's, Essex; 10 a.m., <https://www.stjohnsessex.org/>
- St. John's, West Hartford; 10:30 a.m., <https://siparish.net/>
- Washington National Cathedral; 11:15 a.m., <https://cathedral.org/>

Sunday morning call-in option:

Calvary Church, Stonington, is offering a call-in-only option. The service is at 9 a.m. The phone number is 1-857-957-1130 and enter passcode 215866948#.

CEC Phone Tree Info:

Each person/family is assigned to a “branch” with a Branch Leader. Your Branch Leader will call you at least once a week to check in on you. If you prefer not to be called as regularly (or at all) please let your Branch Leader know. We hope you’ll find these calls to be a helpful and encouraging touchpoint in your life.