



DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD

The Episcopal Church in Central and Southern Illinois

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AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING MY RETIREMENT



To my dear sisters and brothers in Christ of the Diocese of Springfield: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are continuing to traverse the uncharted territory of a public health emergency as best we can. On the whole, we have found that grace has been abundant, for which we are immensely grateful. It will take a good while longer than I think any of us anticipated when we were asked to stay at home in March, but we will get through this. Hope has not died!

However, we need to adjust to the emerging reality about how long this is going to last. By early next week (Tuesday, probably) I expect to release a set of new guidelines for the conduct of worship in the diocese. Unless there is a sudden and unexpected upsurge in new cases, we should be able to start dipping a toe in the water of reopening. It will be a long and gradual process.

In the meantime, any projection I have seen indicates that we will remain in Phase 3 (10-person limit on gatherings) well into the fall. Our ability to hold an in-person meeting of synod in October looks highly unlikely. This, of course, has an impact in the planned process of electing and consecrating my successor. The nominating synod is scheduled to be part of our regular synod in October, with walkabouts (presumably) set for late October, and the electing synod in mid-November. Unless we decide that this can all be accomplished “virtually,” without any in-person gatherings, there is not a realistic possibility of it happening.

Accordingly, I informed the Presiding Bishop's office yesterday, and announced to Diocesan Council today, that **I am suspending the progress of my process toward retirement, and rescinding my call for the election of the 12th Bishop of Springfield.** Both of these items will be revisited as data become available, but the process of discernment and election of a bishop is too important to be done under compromised conditions. I will work with diocesan clergy and lay leaders to determine when we might be able to accomplish this work upon reaching Phase 5 of Governor Pritzker's protocols—complete reopening, with no restriction on size of public assembly, and no expectation of personal distancing or a general need for face coverings. This would mean that an effective and widely-available treatment has been discovered, a vaccine has been developed, or “herd immunity” has been achieved. Most estimates place these conditions more than a year away. If we reach Phase 4 in the next few months, perhaps some aspects of the election process can restart.

Many might remember the hymn *Once to every man and nation* (not included in Hymnal 1982). It contained the memorable line,

New occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth.

The pandemic is a “new occasion” that none of us foresaw when we laid the plans for an episcopal transition. The timetable that I envisioned, and upon which other plans have been overlaid, has become an “ancient good” that is now “uncouth.” So we must embrace “new duties” as they have been laid on us, as the crosses we are bidden to bear. I am confident that grace will continue to abound. God is good, all the time.

+Daniel

EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE

Mission agency-backed craft business in Tanzania shifts production to masks and face shields

Episcopal News Service digest of COVID-19 news from around the church

Vermont church sees opportunity during pandemic to step up homelessness outreach

Northwest Pennsylvania ministry meets unspoken needs, providing tampons, diapers, wipes

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