



THE
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH[®]
IN MISSISSIPPI

The Rt. Rev. Brian R. Seage
Bishop

September 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the incredible ministries being offered throughout our diocese. It's been a blessing to be part of this branch of the Jesus Movement during an unprecedented moment in history. Our clergy and lay leadership have been nothing short of amazing in adapting to the challenges thrown their way. Your faith and perseverance give me great hope.

I let the clergy know by email earlier that I was planning on making an announcement about changes in my previous attendance restrictions. As of today, September 2, 2020, in addition to **social distance** expectations already in place, congregations have my permission to expand attendance for indoor worship up to 50% of your attendance capacity, as long as you are able to seat everyone at least **six feet apart**. Attendance at outdoor worship should follow all previous **social distancing** requirements and safety protocol. My directives issued on May 20 ([DIOMS-resumeworship-5/20](#)) remain in effect for all areas of ministry. Again, it remains a requirement that **social distancing (six feet in all directions)** be practiced at all services, indoors or out.

The following bullet points are reminders of our ongoing safety protocol:

- Masks are to be worn at all times.
- Hand sanitizer should be made available.
- Maintain appropriate social distancing at all times.
- Continue offering Christian education and youth programs by virtual means. Our Missioner for Youth and Christian Education, Whitney Robinson (wrobinson@dioms.org), has collected resources that offer Christian education for use at home or within your bubble. She is happy to assist with ideas and support.
- Monitor local laws or ordinance that exist within your parish and community context.

Please pay close attention to the COVID statistics in your city and county. I am aware that there are a lot of details involved in increasing attendance, and if your parish leadership is willing to increase your numbers, it may be advisable to expand by a small number at first before opening up for larger attendance. The start of the fall semester and program year is one of the most important and exciting times in the life of any parish and I know this is not the “start up” Sunday imagined by anyone in January 2020. I hope the potential expanded attendance numbers provide refreshment and renewal for all. I know this has been a time of anxiety and uncertainty. I miss you all, and look forward to a time when we can again “Lift Up Our Hearts” as a gathered community of faith!

God Bless You,

+**Brian**

BRS:pj

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