



The Standing Committee of The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

The Rev Dr John Floberg
The Very Rev Mark Strobel
The Rev Dn Terry Overbo

Mr. Donald Henderson
Mr. Robert Fox
Dr. Christie Iverson

May 23, 2020

Members of the Diocese of North Dakota
Diocesan Council

Dear Friends:

On Friday, May 22nd, the Standing Committee communicated a decision to make it possible to reopen our congregations no earlier than Pentecost (May 31st) under certain Protocols. You will find out what decisions are being made locally by your worship leadership.

If you have a Priest in Charge or Rector, that person has the responsibility of the decision. They may of course consult with the Wardens, other Clergy of the congregation and the Vestry - but within the parameters of the decision by the Standing Committee and following the protocols set forth - it is their decision.

Without a Priest in Charge or Rector the decision falls to the Sr. Warden and Vestry together with a licensed Worship Leader. Each congregation will be required to contact me (jffloberg@gmail.com) with their decision to remain closed or to open. No Clergy or Worship Leader is compelled to lead worship.

Members of the congregation that are considered by their doctors to be at higher risk to be in public gatherings should stay home. Those congregations that are presently providing online Worship Services are likely to continue them. Receiving communion at home or privately at the church can be made available for those families unable to attend services for these reasons.

The Standing Committee is expecting each person to respect and follow the Protocols that are being established. When we find that a Protocol needs to be changed (eased or strengthened) we will make that change known.

We are sorry that the congregations in Fargo/Moorhead will not be given the choice to reopen at this time. The Department of Health in the State of North Dakota recognizes the higher outbreak of the Covid-19 Virus in that part of the Valley. The situation there needs to change before we can reopen those congregations.

The Standing Committee and Canon Missioner will continue to watch the trends throughout the Diocese. A congregation that is open as early as May 31st may be expected to close again a week later if there is warrant for the change.

Finally, these Protocols do not come naturally for the most part. Social Distancing is not how we have lived our lives in relationship with friends and relatives. Passing of the Peace will "feel different." The question "Have You Hugged An Episcopalian?" will be answered by just saying "No." Until there is a vaccine or a ready cure our best defense will be following these Protocols. Each congregation may add to them. No congregation may disregard or change them of their intent or substance.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Floberg" with a small cross at the end.

The Rev Dr John Floberg
Standing Committee President