14 November 2020

To: Clergy of the Diocese of Montana

 Wardens of the Diocese of Montana

Topic: Bishop’s Pastoral Directive

Dear friends,

It is with heavy heart that I tell you that, beginning November 16th, **we must move all church worship services to virtual or outside until after November 29th**. This is due to the logarithmic increase of COVID-19 cases in our state, as well as the overflow capacity of our hospitals in many parts of the state. I know some areas are not yet seeing this increase, but this is a time for solidarity with our siblings who must do church virtually. We are now seeing COVID-19 clinical cases in our churches; we must protect our communities from this pandemic as best we can. The church offices may remain open as long as the COVID-19 protocols outlined in my May directive are followed. Non-worship meetings should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Balancing our risks vs. benefits, small gatherings of 12-Step programs should be encouraged. My hope is that we will be able to do limited in-person worship at Christmas.

The diocesan website under COVID-19 resources will continue to be updated with resources that will help in the continued worship of God and formation of our souls. If you find a good resource, please forward to Jill Sallin. Please be aware that the majority of the international and U.S. public health community has rejected the Great Barrington Declaration, as have I. However, I have signed, as an individual epidemiologist, the John Snow Memorandum which can be found at [www.johnsnowmemo.com](http://www.johnsnowmemo.com).

“O most mighty and merciful God, in this time of grievous sickness, we flee to you for help. Deliver us, we beseech you, from our peril; give strength and skill to all those who minister to the sick; prosper the means made use for their care; and grant that, perceiving how frail and uncertain our life is, we may apply our hearts to that heavenly wisdom which leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.”*

Bishop Marty Stebbins