

# Glad Tidings



Ascension 2020

The Newsletter of the United Episcopal Church of North America

## LENT AND EASTER DURING COVID-19



**The tomb was empty and so were most churches.** Much like the first Easter, the faithful were unsure what was happening and met in small groups, if at all. There were no throngs of families decked out in springtime finery, parishioners who appear only twice a year, or visitors looking to celebrate Christ's resurrection. But, all of the UECNA's parishes observed Easter in memorable ways. Passion Sunday and Palm Sunday were at the beginning of the lockdown confusion and many services were cancelled – some at the last minute. Easter services became a priority; online or in small groups, the great day was filled with prayers, hymns, messages of hope, and expressions of thanks for God's glory in sending His Son to be a sacrifice for our salvation. Whether online via YouTube, Facebook, Zoom, Periscope or other means, or by having extra services to allow ten or fewer people to gather, UEC clergy are to be commended for finding ways to minister to their congregations.

On St. Mark's Day, Archbishop Robinson wrote this in an email to the clergy: I don't know about you, but I find the present restrictions both tiring and tiresome. It seems to take a lot longer to do things, or it seems to require a lot more effort. One reason you have not had me hectoring you about what to do in the present situation, apart from a little advice

on Facebook at the beginning of this mess, is that the restrictions, and how they are interpreted, vary greatly from state to state. Any 'rules' issued by me might well have worked in Virginia, but have been total nonsense in Missouri or Arizona. I believe that wherever possible we have managed to keep the public worship of God going in one form or another. I have heard tell of parking lot services, of parishes dividing into groups to holding multiple services, and some of you have taken it online, but it has been heartening to see the ingenuity and determination that many of you have displayed in keeping worship going in what has been a perplexing couple of months. Well done! Keep it up.

Even when the present health drama is over, there will still be many issues to be talked about. Among which will be the way in which many authority figures have singularly failed to comprehend that Christianity is a sacramental religion which does require us to gather to participate in the Eucharist. Another issue seems to have been the way in which state governments have been very quick to assume that church attendance is a non-essential activity. It may be for them, but it is not for us. Past epidemics have resulted in church closures, but these have usually been of short duration, and been locally ordered by city and county health departments as was the case during the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic, and then only at the height of the crisis. *(Continued on Page 2.)*

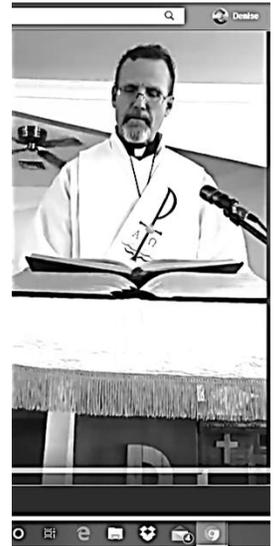


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Needless to say, the Covid-19 drama is having its effect on our life as a Church. We have several ordinations on hold including those of Ian Mosley, and also the conditional ordinations of Dr. Chris King, and the Rev. Todd Davis. These will happen as soon as the restrictions lighten up enough that it is possible to organise the appropriate ceremonies.

You should expect to hear from your bishops/episcopal visitors, if diocesan Synods or Convocations are going ahead as planned. I would assume that South and Ozarks, and West are far enough out that there will be no difficulty; but Great Lakes, and East may be affected.



still celebrated Our Lord's victory over sin, Satan, and death. Christianity is not meant to be an apologetic or a timid faith, but one that is confident in proclaiming the victory that Christ has won. I hope that when we finally come off the present restrictions we will all have learnt to appreciate the value of public worship. The Church is not a social club, it is the body of Christ, and this is particularly evident when we gather in corporate worship, and to celebrate the sacraments. Right now, we need to remain hopeful, strong in the knowledge that Christ has conquered, and that He is this world's one true hope.

Every blessing,

+Peter



Photos, Front Page:

- upper L: Good Shepherd, Waynesboro VA
- upper R: Fr Tom Harbold, Sykesville MD
- lower L: St. Stephen, Boyce VA
- lower R: Dcn Kenyon Bunch & Fr Jim McTaggart, St. Joseph, Branson MO

Photos, this page:

- upper L: Fr Aaron Long, Paul's Chapel, Lexington NC
- upper R: Dcn Marshall Annis, St Paul's, Prescott AZ
- lower L: St. Stephen, Boyce VA
- lower R: Fr Mike McDonald, Sovereign Grace, Grand Rapids MI