



July 8, 2020

"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." -1 John 4:16

Dear Friends in the Risen Christ;

As people of faith and followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our highest ideal and primal calling to be a people grounded and guided in love. During the past few months of pandemic, we have demonstrated our love for God made real and present in each other by wearing face coverings, washings hands, and refraining from gathering in-person for worship.

We are once again being called into a time of sacrificial love as cases of COVID-19 begin to rise in the State of Missouri and around the world. Effective **July 15, 2020** in-person public worship within the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri is suspended until **September 1, 2020**. Gatherings of 10 or fewer persons within the worship space may continue for the purposes of livestreaming, prayer, and office administration. At this time, all prior safety protocols remain in effect throughout the Diocese.

Like you, I long for a time when we can safely gather for worship and ministry, to break bread and fellowship. I long to be able to meet you in person and to hear your hopes and dreams for the future of our common life. However, during this time of uncertainty the best way we can show love of God and love of neighbor is to continue to refrain from gathering for a time.

That does not mean that the work of serving Christ in others goes undone. That does not mean that kindness, grace, or hope are suspended. This time of pandemic challenges us as people of faith and as the Church to dream new dreams, to cast new visions, and to express our faith in Jesus Christ in new and creative ways. I invite you to join me in this sacred work of love.

As we continue on this journey, may God bless and keep you, those you love, and those whom you serve, now and always.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Deon K. Johnson".

The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson,
Eleventh Bishop of Missouri