

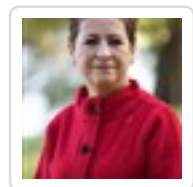
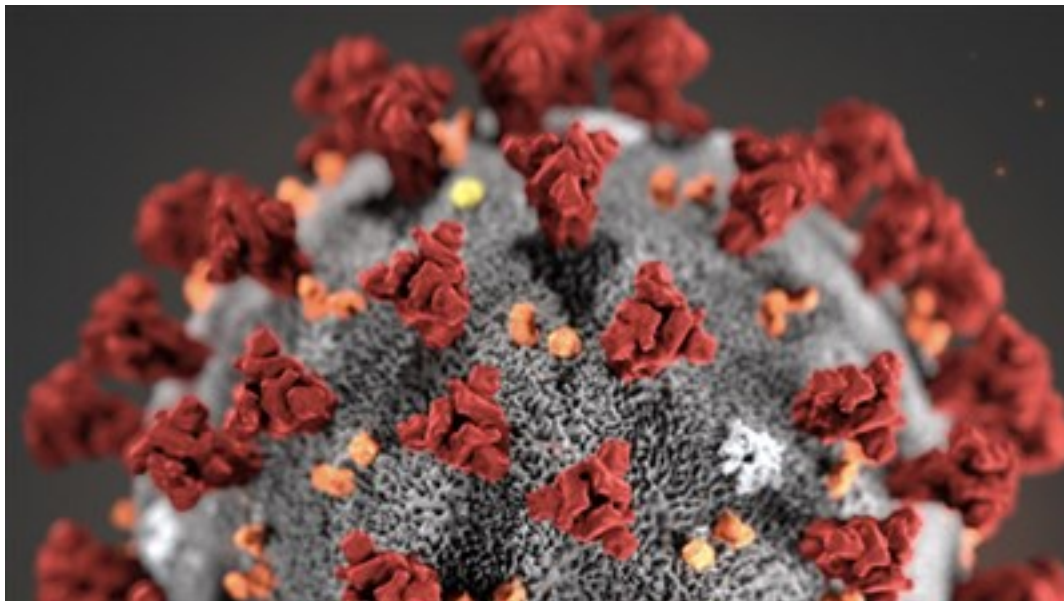


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A Statement from Bishop Harvey: March 16



Bishop Cynthia
Fierro Harvey
March 16, 2020

I applaud the
many ways
congregations

are reaching out to their communities in response to COVID-19. So many of you took to the "airwaves" this weekend and conducted creative and innovative

alternatives to in-person worship.

Many of you are now exploring ways to keep children fed while there is no school, and you are caring for the elderly and most vulnerable populations with extraordinary compassion.

The CDC continues to update information, and Sunday evening recommended that groups of more than 50 cancel their gatherings.

Today, I am asking you to postpone all in-person gatherings of all sizes and that you explore new and creative alternatives to in-person worship. There will come a time when we can resume normal activity, but for now, this is the 'new normal.' We are constantly communicating with officials and will continually update as needed.

I, more than anyone, recognize that public worship is an essential and vital spiritual discipline. I also know that in times of high anxiety, gathering for worship is important. However, today, in our current situation, public gatherings may violate John Wesley's first General Rule, "Do no harm."

This virus is serious and spreads quickly, but healthcare officials tell us that every effort we make has the potential to slow the rate of infection so that health care services can respond appropriately.

These are unprecedented times that call for unprecedented measures. The best thing we can do is avoid exposure. You may not know whether you have been exposed. Think about the person who touched the item in the grocery store shelf before you picked it up to put it in your cart or the doorknob you

turned to get into the building or the gas pump you used yesterday.

While you may be feeling fine, you may have the virus and unknowingly infect another.

I heard a doctor express it this way; "Act ***as if*** you are contagious."

Encourage your congregation to call one another, drop a bag of groceries on the doorstep of your elderly neighbor, or a week of lunches to the family with school-aged children.

Of course, keep washing your hands between every interaction with someone, and if you feel ill, follow the protocol.

These are times when we can be at our best.

Love your neighbor in unprecedented ways!

Grace and Peace,

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey

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