



St. Michael's in the Hills  
Episcopal Church

My Sisters, Brothers and Others,

Eight months ago we suspended all 'in-person' worship due to the coronavirus pandemic. In the following four months, we improvised and experimented with ways to sustain our liturgical and pastoral life remotely with many valuable lessons learned in the process. For the most recent four months, we have been blessed with the gift of limited 'in-person' worship bolstered by live-streaming for remote participation.

Now, we find ourselves at another crossroad as rates of COVID-19 infection escalate across the country and within our own community. As a result, the following question has become pressing: not whether we will be suspending in-person worship to protect the congregation and our community, but rather when will we suspend in-person worship?

On Thursday, November 19th, we received news of the Lucas County Health Department's stay-at-home advisory, which is effective immediately, and remains in place until December 17th. This specifically states, "Gathering together is extremely risky right now." In addition, we also received a letter from Bishop Hollingsworth echoing these same concerns and asking congregation leaders to consider returning to online gatherings. Bishop Hollingsworth emphasized that it is his own inclination to do so. While this is short of a mandate, it is a clear indication of a preference for suspending 'in-person' worship for the time-being.

To this end, following consultation with the Vestry, the Wardens and I have concluded that the best course of action is to suspend 'in-person' worship effective immediately until at least December 17th. Until we return to 'in-person' worship we will continue to provide multiple robust online worship opportunities and other virtual online gatherings to encourage engagement and maintain the connection among members of the community and those who are just curious.

Yours in thanksgiving for Christ's love,  
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