



The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

The Right Reverend Robert S. Skirving, Bishop

June 29, 2020

“So then let’s also run the race that is laid out in front of us,
since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us.
Let’s throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up,
and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith’s pioneer and perfecter.”

Hebrews 12:1-2a (Common English Bible)

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Wednesday, May 13 a document titled “The Next Steps of our Easter Journey” was distributed across our diocese, offering guidelines for clergy and congregations to use in making decisions about a return to public worship, which had been suspended since March 13. The idea of “our Easter Journey” was drawn from the gospel story of the two disciples who encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus, a story that we proclaimed on April 26, the 3rd Sunday of Easter. This COVID-19 journey that we’re on has lasted more than fifteen weeks, and the end of the journey is not yet in sight.

With Governor Cooper’s Executive Order No. 147, dated June 24th, the people of North Carolina learned that we would be continuing in “Phase Two” for another few weeks, until at least July 17, with the additional requirement that we are now to wear face coverings in most public situations. Congregations of the Diocese of East Carolina are therefore to continue to live within the restrictions and requirements that have been in place since we entered Phase Two, while following the guidelines published for our use on May 13. We will review these restrictions and requirements as we move forward into each new phase.

Over this long journey, many of us will have had moments of fatigue or exhaustion, longing to leave COVID-19 behind. And yet we must go on. We go on with the confidence that we are surrounded by the “great cloud of witnesses” that have gone before us in this life. We go on with the knowledge that we have one another as companions on the journey. We go on with the faith that Jesus walks with us. So let us “fix our eyes on Jesus” and continue in the work of being God’s Church here and now and in the face of the needs of a hurting world. Let us take seriously the disciplines of the first of our baptismal promises, to “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers,” knowing that through these disciplines we are given by God the strength for any journey.

I remain, yours in Christ,

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