



The Episcopal  
Diocese of San Joaquin  
*The Central Third of California*

August 6, 2020

Sisters and Brothers of EDSJ,

I am aware that pastoral letters from my hand and heart reached you in March (two separate), April (again, two), May and June. The last correspondence came to you on June 2nd. Immediately following the issuing of that pastoral letter, a diocesan working group, as you know, put together recommendations for diocesan guidelines and protocols in our response to the pandemic. Subsequently, those recommendations were discussed and endorsed by Diocesan Council and Standing Committee and then made available to you.

Since June's pastoral letter, much has occurred. We spent the month of July in the largest social platform gathering in EDSJ's history. Over one hundred gathered for five consecutive Wednesdays exploring and discussing realities of white supremacy, entitlement and privilege. We discussed the prevalence of institutional racism in our midst and explored how we might move from complicity to holy action. I know you join with me in thanking Constance and Dain Perry for facilitating this important work with us.

Additionally in July, it was my absolute pleasure to ordain Rev'd Angela Lerena and Rev'd Nelson Povedo to the priesthood. This was an unprecedented and unique occasion for EDSJ as we exercised social distancing, we wore masks and much of the service was pre-recorded. And through it all, God was there and God made the extraordinary occur as God does. Congratulations to both Angela and Nelson.

Since June we have progressed well on our diocesan-wide solar project. We are now thoroughly into Phase 1 and beginning to move towards Phase 2. Panels have been installed at St. Anne's, Stockton and construction is beginning at ECCO.

And last week, we announced the arrival of Rev'd Julie Kelly at Church of the Savior, Hanford and Rev'd Ryan Eikenbary, at St. Anne's, Stockton. Julie will also be serving at St. James Lutheran, Hanford and Ryan will also serve at Zion Lutheran, Stockton. This is the first time EDSJ has engaged in our full communion relationship with our Lutheran Sisters and Brothers. This is truly an important "ecumenical moment" for EDSJ. I know that you will join me, laity and clergy, in welcoming Julie and Ryan.

And other developments to note since June include the continued progress of our Creation Care Commission under the leadership of Deacon Terrance Goodpasture and the movement towards a Racial Reconciliation Commission. We have continued our weekly “Clergy Cohort” zoom gathering and this week we begin our “Weekday Virtual Visitations” which will ultimately include every Faith Community. And of course, socially platformed worship continues through our cathedral and diocese.

Lastly, concurrently released with this Pastoral Letter, our Diocesan Commission SJRAISE has launched a must see video on “Uncaged Art.” Please take the time see this important piece displaying the art of young people confined to Detention Centers. Please visit: [diosanjoaquin.org](http://diosanjoaquin.org) to view.

So, Sisters and Brothers of EDSJ, we have not been still since my last pastoral letter. We have not remained still in these summer months. And we have not been still through this horrific pandemic. Much has occurred and yet one thing remains. God is with us and God has not been still during these inordinately challenging days of COVID-19.

On occasion, I have had clergy and laity recount this question posed to them, “Why have I seen people walk into the church, down the street, on a Sunday morning, or gathering outside the church, and we’re not.” I cannot answer for the church down the street. I can, however, remind us of our caring, cautious and conservative response from the moment we first became aware of this pandemic. I can remind us that God perpetually calls us to consider the safety, the well-being and the health of those with whom we share community. I can remind us that listening to health care professionals and the scientific community has also been and will continue to be integral to the development of Episcopal ethos, theology and practice. And I can remind us that you and I are called by God to actively pray along and walk through the Way of Love, that is the Way of Jesus, and that most definitely includes wearing masks, social distancing and consider how our decisions impact everyone in our personal and communal orbit. And lastly, I can remind us, as I have suggested, that God is with us and God continues to move in our midst.

Stay well and safe EDSJ.

Blessings

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross symbol and a plus sign, followed by a stylized 'D' and 'a'.

+David