

### *On this Eucharistic Fast – short statement*

The present pandemic has thrust us into what seems to be the unknown. Physical distancing has been countered helpfully with online community-building. Many in our church's leadership are offering spiritual leadership in the live streaming of worship and prayer. One of the most difficult realities that we face as worshipping communities is that suspension of gatherings for worship does mean the suspension of celebrations of the Holy Eucharist.

Whereas musical and theatrical performances can be moved online, the Eucharist is not about performance by one for the many and cannot move into that mode. The sacrament is made such in and through the gathering of people with a presider, in a place and time, in the physical presence of what we can touch and taste, together, as well as hear and see. Efforts to replace the community's physical-and-spiritual gathering with practices that try to offer a eucharistic communion online, though well-intentioned, do not reflect our sacramental theology, which is deeply about the physical-and-spiritual together.

This is, now, a time of eucharistic fasting, in which we join with the whole communion of saints in longing for the bread of new life and the wine of the age to come. This can seem very strange to us as we are discovering ways through videoconferencing and social media to keep connected and to nurture community. Aren't those connections enough to 'make' eucharist? Simply put, no. We are blessed to have the technological tools at our hands in order to connect and to make community as St. Paul did when he was able to write letters and have them securely delivered to Corinth and Rome. But as Paul knew, even when we cannot gather to make eucharist together we are not without the real presence of Christ in our very real, socially isolated, midst. This may be a time to build from the evangelical foundations of what we have been given: the Good News of Christ's presence with us that compels us to be healing real presence to the world. Our fasting from the eucharist can help to push us out of our normal patterns in order to discover some deep rhythms of faith. We are reminded that sacramentality itself – the awareness of the reality of Christ's true presence with us here and now and at all times - is broader than the specific celebrations of baptism and eucharist in which we have shared and will share. We are reminded that the Body of Christ – we disciples – is the sacrament to the world.