



March 30, 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

This Lenten season, we find ourselves in the middle of an unprecedented pandemic that brings mounting challenges to all of us, but especially to our neighbors who struggle during the best of times. Many of our congregations are discovering innovative ways to safely continue serving their neighbors in need as they live out their Baptismal Covenant to demonstrate and grow in generosity, compassion and mercy. But as their limited resources to carry out these ministries are threatened in our current economic crisis, some will not be able to survive.

In response, the diocese has established an emergency fund to help congregations continue their ministries as the crisis escalates. This fund will be administered by Episcopal Community Ministries (ECM), and every contribution will be matched by the William Cooper Procter Fund. Outreach ministries that focus on food insecurity, housing and emergency assistance can apply for an [emergency grant](#).

You may recall that after much discernment by myself and its governing board, our Episcopal Community Services Foundation (ECSF) was disbanded at the end of 2019 and transitioned to Episcopal Community Ministries at the first of the year. This change has made it possible for this essential ministry to continue without the financial burden of operating as a separate foundation. Organizational and administrative services are now handled by the ECM committee with support from the bishop's operations staff. As a result, every dollar of your contribution to ECM goes to assisting people in need.

Of recent note, [The CARES Act](#) (signed 3/27) incentivized charitable donations with an above-the-line deduction up to \$300. Beginning with your 2020 tax return, you can deduct up to \$300 charitable contributions whether you itemize or not. I am mindful that many of you are also facing an uncertain financial future and it is hard to give during troubled times. If you are not financially impacted during this crisis, now is the optimal opportunity to give – not only can you claim recent tax advantages, but you can double your donation with this matching grant, while revealing to those who are our neighbors in need God's love, grace, compassion and mercy.

Your donation can be [made online](#). Checks should be made out to Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio and earmarked **ECM Matching Grant campaign**. Mail checks to Diocese of Southern Ohio, attn: Episcopal Community Ministries, 412 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

To learn more about how some of our outreach ministries are meeting the desperate need in their communities, [read their stories on the ECM website](#), posted under “Stories of Hope.”

I hope that you will take this unique opportunity to reach out in this common time of need both spiritually and financially.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas E. Breidenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'T' and 'B'.

The Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Breidenthal
Bishop of Southern Ohio