



2750 E. Cardinal Dr., Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

1 February 2021

Dear St. Stephen's,

We are entering February with mixed news about the pandemic. There are vaccines being given now to those 65 years or older and those with certain underlying health conditions. Some of you have been able to get a vaccine and for that I am grateful. However, there continue to be shortages of the vaccines distributed and I know our government is trying to find ways to get more vaccines to the people. We continue to hear about additional pharmaceutical companies making additional vaccines and working to get those released for emergency use. All of that is promising.

On the other hand, we know that the UK and South African variants are now in multiple places in the nation and it is only a matter of time before they are also in our neighborhood. The concern with the UK and South African variants is that they appear to be MORE contagious and might be also more deadly. The researchers are continuing to examine these new mutations of the virus and the initial reports suggest that the existing vaccines will work against these new variants to some extent.

I keep watch on the statistics for our Arizona state and Cochise County rates of infection and numbers of new cases. As it was previously when we went from phase 1 to phase 2 this summer, I am looking for 14 days of continuous decreases in infection rates/new cases. I am attaching a page from the Johns Hopkins University Data Dashboard for Arizona and Cochise County. It shows that although our number have declined a bit, our infection rate is still higher than desired... Arizona is at 11.4 positive infection rate and Cochise county is at 8.2.

The disease experts are concerned that the next 2 months may be some of the worst we have seen because of the increased contagiousness of the new variants. Because I deeply care for us all and want to try to keep us as safe as possible, I am extending our online worship phase 1 to Mid-March... adding another month to our shut-down to 14 March. If we suddenly have more vaccines available and numbers come down, I will happily reverse this decision.

Nearly all of us now know of someone who has had Covid. Some survived and some have not. Just this past weekend my sister Kim in South Carolina tested positive. She has been practicing the protocols and is not certain exactly how she caught it. So far, she has moderate symptoms: low energy/sleepiness, headache, body aches, chills, sore throat, slight cough. Thank you for your prayers for Kim as she goes through this.

Please continue to be cautious. Get your vaccine as soon as you can! I know we all want this to end sooner rather than later. We are all tired of masks, distancing, and not being able to gather the way we like... trust me, as an extrovert, I feel it as badly as you do. God be with us to protect us and keep our hopes high.

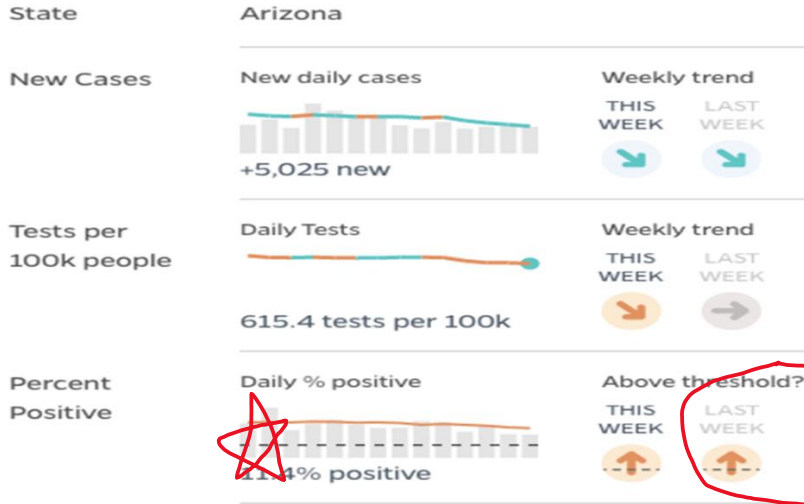
Peace,

The Reverend Allison Cornell

Rector, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

[www.ststephensaz.org](http://www.ststephensaz.org)

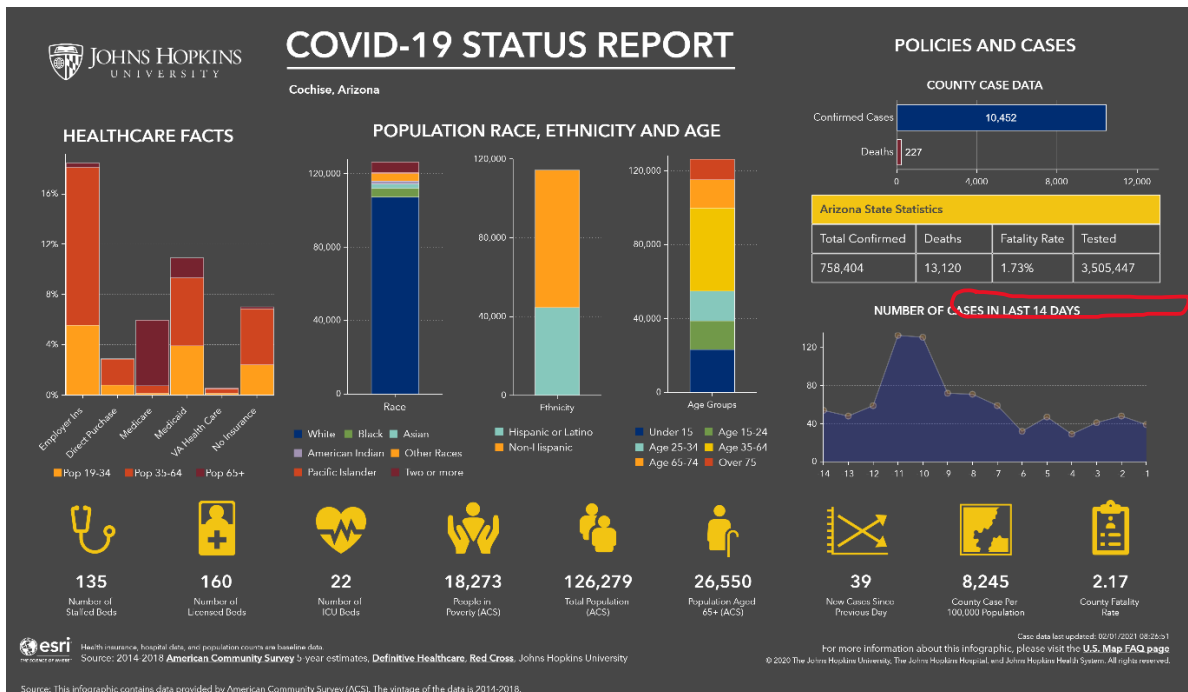
520-458-4432



This graphic was last updated on Monday, February 1, 2021 at 03:00 AM EST.

coronavirus.jhu.edu

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## Ash Wednesday Services – February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

- 12pm Noon – In person and Online with Facebook Live or Church Website
- 5:30pm – In person only.

We will use Q-tips to impose ashes on the foreheads of those who wish to receive them during the service. This will prevent cross contamination.

People who are remaining home and who will watch online can pick up a small bag of ashes to impose on yourself or on those who reside in your home with you. An instruction card will accompany the ashes. Ashes can be picked up from church by calling 520-458-4432 (office) or emailing [revallison@ststephensaz.org](mailto:revallison@ststephensaz.org) to request a packet after Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>.

Covid protocols of masks, distancing, and sanitizing remain in effect for those attending in person.

### **About Ash Wednesday:**

Ash Wednesday is the Wednesday of the seventh week before Easter and the first day of Lent. The day is named for the practice of imposing ashes, a practice that many Christian congregations have found to be a very meaningful part of the Ash Wednesday liturgy.

Using ashes as a sign of repentance is an ancient practice, often mentioned in the Bible (e.g., Jonah 3:5-9; Job 42:6; Jeremiah 6:26; Matthew 11:21). The early Christians adopted the use of ashes from Jewish practice as an external mark of penitence.

Ashes symbolize several aspects of our human existence:

- Ashes remind us of God's condemnation of sin, as God said to Adam, "Dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).
- Ashes suggest cleansing and renewal. They were used anciently in the absence of soap. Even on Ash Wednesday, this most penitential day, we receive ashes in the form of the cross, the same symbol placed on our forehead in our baptism. Even in this ashen mark of death, we anticipate the new life of Easter.
- Ashes remind us of the shortness of human life, for it is said as we are buried into the ground or as ashes are placed in a columbarium: "We commit this body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust".
- Ashes are a symbol of our need to repent, confess our sins, and return to God.

If you have questions, contact Rev. Allison.

## **LENTEN DEVOTIONALS and LENTEN STUDY VIA ZOOM on SUNDAYS in LENT:**

Starting the first Sunday of Lent, February 21<sup>st</sup>, at 12 noon, Rev. Allison will facilitate a zoom discussion based on the Lenten devotional from Episcopal Relief and Development for 2021. This can be downloaded from the following link:

ERD Lenten Devotional 2021:

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Lent-2021-English-Color.pdf>

For another possibility of Lenten Devotionals, here is another link for a devotional from the Pittsburgh Seminary of the Presbyterian Church:

<https://www.pts.edu/UserFiles/File/PDFs/Lent%20Devotional%202021/Lent%20Devotional%202021%20-%20Print.pdf>

While we will be focusing on the one from ERD, you may find either or both to be helpful for you during this coming Lenten season. With so much loss this past year, the ERD version explores 4 steps of Lamenting: Rest, Reflect, Repent, Restoration. The Pittsburgh Theological Seminary version has personal reflections on one of the readings for each day. Both are free for download and use.

Mark will print out a few copies for those who don't have print capabilities or online capabilities to have these as resources. Please contact the church office to arrange to get a printed copy.

### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86935184063?pwd=M0ZhWEc3NEVRVncvQUY5VjZSa2hUT09>

Meeting ID: 869 3518 4063

Passcode: 923037

Dial by your location

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Hope to see you online for this time of reflection and sharing our thoughts.

Peace,

Rev. Allison Cornell

[www.ststephensaz.org](http://www.ststephensaz.org)

520-458-4432