

ST. CHRISTOPHER by-the-RIVER
AN EPISCOPAL PARISH IN THE DIOCESE OF OHIO
The Reverend Ann Kidder, Rector

March 13, 2020

Dear Friends,

We have all watched the global spread of the new Corona virus as it reached our country and as the disease it causes, COVID-19, began to be diagnosed in a growing number of states. This week Ohio has begun to see infections caused by “community spread”. On Wednesday Governor DeWine began issuing directives that involve significant changes in routine for many of us. He has done this in hopes of slowing down the spread of COVID-19, such that our healthcare resources can adequately treat those who need hospitalization. On Thursday, Bishop Hollingsworth issued a letter with suggestions and some Episcopal direction regarding worship, parish meetings/activities, and outreach ministries during the next two weeks of this pandemic.

One option that Bishop Hollingsworth offered was his permission to suspend worship services and other parish gatherings and outreach ministries through at least March 29th at the discretion of the clergy, taking into account each parish’s circumstances. I think that is a choice that makes a lot of sense for our congregation. A significant percentage of our members are over 60 and live with health conditions that put them at high risk should they be exposed to the virus. Following the 10:15 service this Sunday, I am suspending Sunday and weekday worship services through at least March 29th. The Bishop will give us further guidance as we near the end of the month.

We will hold services at 8:00 and 10:15 this Sunday, using the service of Morning Prayer. Given current events, I expect that attendance this Sunday will be rather light. We will be observing good "social distancing" (six feet) and we will not have coffee hour this Sunday. Please don't come to church if you have any concerns at all about whether that would be safe for you to do. I have asked Peggy Reda to notify our families with children that Church School will not be meeting.

I am also suspending all other meetings, activities, and ministries through March 29th. This includes Stephen Ministry meetings (please “meet” with your care receivers by phone – not in person), Daughters of The King (I know you will faithfully continue in your daily intercessory prayers for all), Bargain Box pre-sort work days (we will make a decision about the spring sale in another week or so), The Grief Support Group, the Wednesday night Lenten Simple Suppers, 9 o'clock Forum, and the Lenten Art Retreat. I will be in contact this week with the community groups that meet at St. Christopher's. None of this makes me happy – nor you, I expect. But I do believe that it is important to do our part as members of the community to help slow down the too-rapid spread of this virus.

For the next three Sundays, Trinity Cathedral will be live streaming a service of Holy Eucharist at 10:00 a.m. You can access the link on the Cathedral's website, www.trinitycleveland.org You can also sign up for a daily Lenten reflection via the Diocesan website at www.dohio.org

I will be reaching out to you by phone during this time to check on you pastorally and to see if you need anything. Peggy Reda will be providing materials via email for you to continue your children's faith formation at home. I will likely email a "sermon" somewhere along the way and please call me (cell 207-664-4041 or office 440-423-4451) if you have a pastoral need or just a case of cabin fever. Let's be here for each other! Please join me in calling to say hello to our fellow parishioners. If you have neighbors who live alone, are elderly, or have health issues please call to check on them as well. We can continue to be "One Body" with a little creativity.

In closing, I would like to share this prayer which a colleague sent recently. It is adapted from the New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 765

God of the present moment,
God who in Jesus stills the storm
and soothes the frantic heart;
bring hope and courage to all
who wait or work in uncertainty.
Bring hope that you will make them the equal
of whatever lies ahead.
Bring them courage to endure what cannot be avoided,
for your will is health and wholeness;
You are God, and we need you.

With Love,
Ann+