



Weekly E-News from Grace Episcopal Church

March 13, 2020

A Message from the Rector

In a conference call with the clergy of the diocese last night, our bishop gave his permission for rectors to close their churches for the time being in light of the coronavirus pandemic. In consultation with the senior warden, I've decided to do so.

Grace Church will close to the public and for all worship services and other parish activities immediately and through the end of this month.

I hope and pray we will be able to return to worship in our beloved church building - and with our beloved Grace community - by Palm Sunday, though we'll have to adjust as needed. For the duration of this closure we will send each week some sort of online worship experience. While I can't yet say just what that will look like, for this Sunday I encourage us all to gather in front of our computers at 11:00am for a live-streaming of our Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Curry, preaching at the National Cathedral in Washington. Since the Cathedral will itself be empty of parishioners (save for a few worship leaders), this service is meant for all of us across the nation gathered together in spirit and faith. [Click here](#) or on the image above to access this live stream of the Holy Eucharist in the National Cathedral on Sunday morning.

During this time of fear and uncertainty, I want you all to know that I'm available to speak with you anytime. Don't hesitate to call me at 331-3225 (this is my office line, which also forwards messages to my cell phone). The Inreach Ministry will be leading the effort to support the most vulnerable in our parish, and the 20s/30s ministry has kindly offered to



support those efforts as needed.

You will continue to hear from your church regularly in the coming weeks, and in new ways! Let us pray for each other, for those who are most vulnerable to the virus, and for those whose livelihood may be affected. Let us also make sure to reach out to those who are alone. Aside from contagion and fear, loneliness may be the great specter of this epidemic, and we should all do what we can to combat it. Remember, Jesus said, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20) Had Jesus lived in the 21st century, I have no doubt that he would have said that a phone call counts as "gathering", especially in a time such as this!

You are all in my thoughts and prayers,
Jonathan+

A Message from Bishop Knisely

Dear People of God;

It has been many years since we have been confronted with a situation like we are this weekend due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Yet the people who came before us managed this sort of thing and came through it. We will too. We are supported by prayer, by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst and by our love of one another.

We are in a state-declared medical emergency. We are also people who, through our baptism, have put our faith and hope in Jesus and the powerful love of God. We are called to live fearless lives - and not to be careless of others. Please be attentive and follow the directions of the Health Department and other authorities.

I am writing to let you know that I have been in communication with the clergy of this diocese and directed them to make some changes in our regular worship, and I have made it clear that I support the decisions they make along with you in how best to respond to this emergency. Some of our communities have decided it is best to close their building for a few weeks. Some are going to continue to hold services, though with modifications.

In an effort to keep people safe - both our neighbors and ourselves - I am directing that Holy Communion be distributed as bread only for the duration of the emergency. I have told the clergy that if they are not feeling well, they are not to serve at the altar. I've also made some recommendations about keeping our distance from each other at the peace, not passing the offering plates, and about coffee hour.

I ask that you, too, be careful if you are not feeling well. Please let us know so that we can provide pastoral support and care as best we can and pray for you.



Please be in touch with your neighbors. Please reach out to those who are alone. A phone call and a listening heart can do wonders to help.

In our congregations there may be people who need to stay home right now because they are at risk. Please think about how we can help them. If we don't have contact information, it would be good to gather and share that now.

I believe in the power of prayer, especially when people of faith join their united voices and lift their concerns to God. I ask you to join me in prayer that this moment will pass quickly, that the vulnerable and those in danger will be protect-ed and that we may be a sign of hope to our communities.

We have posted resources for prayer and worship at home on the diocesan website (www.episcopalri.org). Prayers for the sick may be found on pages 458-460 in The Book of Common Prayer.

I commend this prayer, adapted from one written by Bishop Thomas Brown of Maine: Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages "curing every disease and illness." At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus. Heal those who are sick with the virus; may they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another. Be present with those in authority who are making hard decisions. Support the medical professionals, emergency responders and our caregivers. In your name Je-sus we pray. Amen.

May the God who is Love itself, the one in we put our trust, and who is the ground of our hope, be with you today and always.

+Nicholas

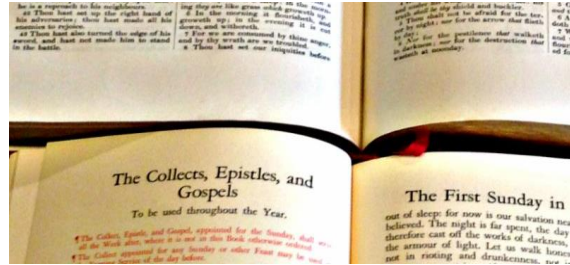
Details of the Temporary Closure at Grace

This closure impacts all parish activities through the end of March, including Sunday worship, the Open Doors ministry, the Wednesday Eucharist, the Thursday Noon concert, the Thursday Lenten Eucharist and dinner, the Stations of the Cross liturgy on Fridays, all meetings and ministry gatherings, all music lessons and choir rehearsals, and the Compline service which had been scheduled for this Sunday evening. If parishioners have purchased items for the Lenten Cross drive to benefit Children's Friend, please kindly hold onto those items until we resume worship. We will continue to send a weekly ENews, so please stay tuned for further updates and some form of online worship experience that we intend to provide.

March 15, 2020

The Third Sunday in Lent

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



For the texts of the readings for The Third Sunday in Lent, [please click here.](#)

This week from the Episcopal Church: [Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent: Learn Click here](#) for the latest from the Episcopal News Service. And for current news from the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island, [please click here.](#)