

3/18/2020

Dear St. Edward's Family,

Greetings in the merciful Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In light of the current situation concerning the Coronavirus following the recommendation of the Government, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), The Episcopal Church (TEC), and with consultation with our vestry it is with a heavy heart and after much prayer that I suspend all in-person activities at St. Edward's Episcopal Church at least through the end of the month. This will include any groups and meetings at the church, non-church events, and Sunday Morning in-person worship.

This decision is not based on fear. Fear is something that polarizes us, grips us, and is often irrational. Wisdom is prudence and good judgment. In 2 Timothy 1:7 the Holy Word of God says, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." So, we must resist the urge to fear. And instead believe in the power of God, the mandate of love, and make prudent decisions. The decision to not meet in-person is the right decision for our parish at this time.

One of the temptations in these times is to give to a competitive spirit. It is not wise for the church to judge who has more faith than others. If a church stays open is it because they have more faith? If a church closes is it because they want to love and protect their community more than if the church stays open? It is easy to give to a judgmental and competitive spirit. That is the same spirit that drives our political world and it is not helpful. I strongly urge you instead to be full of faith and full of love. Be the light of Christ in a frightened world.

So, what does this mean for us?

- 1. We will still have Community.** It will just be of a different sort. Please check your email and/or social media for ways of connecting to your Parish Family in worship. Daily Prayer Videos and encouragement will be sent out from your clergy. You may access these videos through Facebook and YouTube. Also, sermons are available on our website. We will do our best to organize other forms of community worship as we learn new and creative ways to do so.
- 2. The Book of Common Prayer.** If you do not have a BCP to help with prayer and online worship, you may download a copy at bcponline.org.
- 3. Time for Prayer and Bible Reading.** I encourage you to spend more time in prayer and Bible study. Our hope and strength come from spending time in God's presence.
- 4. Share the Love of God.** Spend time on the phone and other ways of communication with parishioners, neighbors, friends, and family. Share your hope that is found in our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

- 5. Pastoral Care.** Please let us pray with you, find out how you are doing, and help with your needs. Although we aren't going to do in person visits currently (except in extreme emergencies) we are here for you. If you need us, please call.
- 6. Community Groups.** Although we are not currently meeting in person. Please stay in touch with each other and look out for one another. If you are a member of Shekinah, the Choir, Tai Chi, Altar Guild, Ushers, etc. please give each other a call and encourage one another in our Lord Jesus.
- 7. Church Finances.** Thankfully, St. Edward's does have financial reserves to help through times of crisis. However, we still ask that you continue to support the church and its ministry. You may give online on our website. You may also mail your pledge and offering to the church. Thank you for continuing to support the church.
- 8. Church Office.** The church office will remain closed to visitors at this time. But the mail will be gathered. The voice messages will also be checked, and we will return calls as soon as we are able to.

We all hope that this time of upheaval ends as soon as possible. Please pray that the God of mercy will lead us through this time. Pray for the people in the medical field that are caring for so many. Pray for the scientist who are working to find a cure. Pray for our leadership who are making very difficult decisions. Pray for those who are sick that they would become well. Pray for those who have lost loved ones and are grieving. Pray for the countries around the world that are more susceptible to pandemics than we are here in the United States. Pray for our Bishop and other ministers who are giving so much time and effort. And pray for yourself that God will relieve fear and replace it with love - *Perfect love drives out fear* (1 John 4:18).

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39).

Blessings and Peace,

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