

Family of St. Francis,

Please take note of the recent update from Bishop Kendrick related to future gatherings and directives for all congregations in this diocese as a response to the Coronavirus. These decisions also fall in line with the suggestions of the CDC and our national and local government agencies.

I fully support and agree with the Bishop's decision. Earlier this morning, your senior warden and I met with over sixty clergy & senior wardens from across the diocese in a conference call with our Bishop. The conversation was excellent but difficult, as we discussed the realities of how we will continue worship and connection with one another. I'll add that the conversation was also hopeful and inspiring as we shared ideas and discussed ways of using technology to continue being the Church to one another and the world during this time.

Though you will read this when you examine the Bishop's letter, there is a key directive that I feel the need to highlight. Effectively immediately until Easter Sunday, April 12th, **the in-person gathering of all events, worship included, will be paused.** With technology, we are working to find a way for all these things to continue, just not in person. Your staff will continue working from the church. Please call and let us know what you need, and we will continue reaching out to you as well.

While we will do our best to continue life at the church, we will feel an abrupt change in our regular routines. Let's make new ones. As noted, we are exploring options with the diocesan staff and beyond as to utilizing technology as best as possible to continue as many regular gatherings as we can. Please give us some time to learn what may work best for our congregation and to get these opportunities up and running. You will be informed.

For now, since technology is not in place, please note the following: No Wednesday noon service or Lenten Supper series. Since Sunday is several days away, we are hoping to have our first 'tech-gathering' either through a streamed service on-line or via phone line. Updates will be shared with you as soon as possible.

This is not the first time worshippers have needed to find a new way to worship. And, this is not the first time Jesus reminds us we do not need a specific place in order to be in worship with God.

From this last Sunday's Gospel passage from John (John 4:5-42), our current situation may remind us of the conversation Jesus had with the woman at the well. The Samaritan woman says to Jesus (John 4:20-21), "Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say the place

where people must worship is Jerusalem.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.’” Jesus goes on to instruct the Samaritan that her understanding of worship needs altered. Jesus continues by helping her, and us, understand that worship is done in ‘spirit and truth,’ which can be fulfilled anywhere and everywhere we go, when we intentionally set our heart and our mind in the right place; on Jesus Christ our Lord.

We will find a way to continue as the church, just not physically in person for however long this may last. May we continue to lift one another in prayer knowing that the church can never be contained, but always proclaimed; sometimes in a new and various way. Amen.

With the peace of Christ,
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