

Dear People of Grace,

March 13, 2020

The Clergy of our Diocese met with Bishop Hughes this morning for an online meeting, and she has asked all churches in the Diocese to abstain from public worship through the end of the month, for the greater good of the vulnerable among us in the community. This is how we will love our neighbor in the coming days, by doing whatever we can to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our area, protecting both people with medical challenges and our health care system.

I know how hard this is for all of us. Especially in these challenging times,

I long for us to be together. My heart misses you when we cannot gather, yet, while I will crave public worship more than I can possibly express in the days to come, I love all the dear people among us who are vulnerable, and I will do anything in my power to keep us all safe. As a community, we will do whatever we can to love and care for each other, creatively using the tools we have for communication, and trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us and hold us together.

Fr. Asa and I will be working diligently with the staff in the coming days, making sure that we are doing everything we can to care for the parish. Even now the staff is working to think creatively about how we can still do ministry and honor the Bishop's request that we abstain from public gathering. The Wardens and Vestry are faithful leaders, who will work together to make sure that our ministries are moving forward in the coming days. We will be sending out periodic emails and updating our website with information as it develops. I feel so blessed to have such gifted colleagues in ministry!

Today Fr. Asa officiated at Noonday Prayers, will be our last public service until we are directed that it is safe to gather together again. Next week, Fr. Asa and I will explore ways to offer prayer and worship via streaming, following the guidance of the Bishop and her staff.

Fear not! We will still be a community who prays daily. That is one of the great blessings of our tradition. We are able to say the Daily Office wherever we may be. So, I am directing Worship Leaders to continue to pray for the Office at the appointed times. They are invited to phone a partner to pray with them on the phone, and in the coming days, we can figure out ways for all of us to pray together using either Facebook or Zoom technology. Worship Leaders will be provided with our prayer lists and the cycle of prayer, which will be kept current by the office staff, so that we can be assured that someone is holding our needs before God on a daily basis, as we do when we are not abstaining from public worship.

I urge you all to pray as often as you are able, following this resource for the Daily Office, and the world needs our prayers, especially now! I find this website very helpful in my own prayer life, particularly when I find myself in places where I don't have my Prayer Book or Bible with me.

Please check in with one another, and please keep us posted at Grace, so that we can know how everyone is doing. I worry about isolation and depression for all of us, so we will need to work together to reach out to one another in unique ways in the coming days. Let us know how to pray for one another. If you need emergency supplies of some kind, let us know and we can see what we can do to share what we have.

Please, if you are able, keep supporting the ministry of Grace Church! Because we cannot have public worship for a few weeks, I worry a great deal about our giving and our budget. Despite a national health crisis, we still have bills to pay, and fiscal responsibilities. You can keep your pledge current by sending your money in or using our online giving. Or if you have not yet pledged, now would be a perfect time to help us out with your gift. All donations help us tremendously! Here is the link for online giving.

The Gospel reading appointed for the Daily Office today is the story of Jesus calming the storm when the disciples he so cherished were in peril and were gripped with fear. Jesus spoke to the storm to protect the ones he loved, saying “Peace! Be still!” His disciples watched all this, and said,

“Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

I am convinced that Jesus is again in this boat with us today, because we are the ones Jesus so loves and longs to comfort. I am certain that Jesus is with us now, and will stay with us no matter what, and that we will learn together how to love and care for each other even in this particular storm.

Please know how dearly I love you, how much I can't wait for us to be together again, and how much I trust that we will all get through this together.

Love, Susan+