

# St. James' E-pistle: **SPECIAL EDITION**

A Second Letter from the Rector March 13, 2020

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Dear People of St. James',

I mentioned this morning that plans involving our common life together might change at any time. It looks like they now have!

Our bishops have just sent out an updated "Letter Concerning COVID-19 (Coronavirus)." You may find the text on the ECCT website [here](#). In it, the bishops strongly recommend that our churches cancel in-person, public worship for at least the next two weeks. **I therefore am announcing that our worship this Sunday and next Sunday, March 22nd will be online only.** The church will not be open for Sunday morning celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. My plan, at this point, will be to offer a live-streamed service of Morning Prayer with sermon at 8am and 10am on the church's Facebook page this Sunday. This will be a new experience for me, so I bid your prayers through this steep learning curve, and ask for your patience as we do our best to keep our options for "socially-distanced" corporate worship open in the midst of what is now officially a pandemic.

Please know that I do not take this change lightly. It pains my heart and soul to have to shut the doors of St. James for Eucharistic worship on a Sunday morning. But I also realize that many of the most faithful members of our worshipping community are those who are most vulnerable to grave illness with

this particular disease. If someone were to fall ill after coming to St. James', I, as the pastor of the congregation, would be devastated to think that we had a chance to prevent the infection, but did not act with utmost abundance of caution. And so, in the interest of our common health in these extraordinary times, we will need to pray our prayers to God separate in body, but very much one in Spirit. For those who do not have Facebook access Sunday morning, I commend the other online resources for worship found on the diocesan website under "Communication and Worship Resources" [here](#). And remember—your [Book of Common Prayer](#) and [Holy Bible](#) are also at the ready to serve your personal devotions at any time!

Of course, worship is only one part of our common life together at St. James' Church. If we are suspending corporate worship together out of caution for our health, we must similarly suspend all of our congregation's gatherings for entertainment, business, fellowship, and study. **Therefore, also in accordance with the guidance of our bishops, we are cancelling or postponing all of our in-person church meetings and gatherings for the next two weeks, including the Red Door Concert scheduled for Sunday and the funeral for Tuesday.**

Again, the intention of these measures is not to halt our life and ministries, but rather simply to prevent disease transmission. So, we will take advantage of our telephone communications, emails, texts, and all other resources at our disposal to keep the gears of St. James' turning through the days ahead. Our vestry, committees, and groups are all asked to try to find ways to adjust their workings to avoid physically coming together. As we make our way forward together, I want to remind all those who may not have my contact information saved into their devices that my cell phone number is (646) 573-2684 and my personal email address

is [dustintrowbridge@hotmail.com](mailto:dustintrowbridge@hotmail.com). Please reach out to me for whatever assistance and support I can provide.

Now, as this long day is now drawing to a close, I ask that you pause with me for a moment. Take a steadying breath, and pray with me for the grace of God to descend upon us, and to calm the fears of the present day and of those that await is still:

*Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.*

Ever yours in Christ,

Fr. Dustin+