



March 12, 2020

Dear Friends,

I write to you, as our Prayer Book so eloquently states it, “wearied by the changes and chances of this life,” but resting in God’s eternal changelessness. The worry around the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is significant. While we still know precious little about this virus, it seems certain that the threat is real, especially to the vulnerable members of our population. I appreciate the concern several have expressed to me about the news of several attendees at last month’s Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes conference in Louisville testing positive for COVID-19. To my knowledge, no one from Christ Church attended that event. We continue to hold all those affected by this virus in our prayers. As WKU, the NCAA, and many other national and for-profit organizations have had to figure out how best to protect us all from the spread of this virus, your clergy, staff, and vestry at Christ Church have spent a lot of time planning for contingencies and making sure we’re faithful to the call of the Gospel and serving our community with compassion, all while keeping ourselves and others safe.

Complicating matters some, or at least speeding up our decision-making processes, at yesterday’s morning press conference updating the Commonwealth’s response to COVID-19, Governor Beshear recommended that churches cancel their services this weekend. This was done in good faith, I believe, to help protect our most vulnerable populations from this virus that seems to impact those over 60, those with underlying health issues, and those with compromised immune systems with great severity. Upon hearing about the Governor’s request, I was in touch with the Bishop’s office, Mother Becca, Deacon Kellie, and our Wardens, Gary Reimer and Shawn Rhodes to seek their advice. At noon yesterday, more than twenty of my clergy colleagues in the Diocese gathered via a web conference to discuss what the request of the Governor meant for our communities of faith. On that call was the Rev. Michael Vollman, who has a Ph.D in critical nursing, and is a professor at the Middle Tennessee School of Anesthesia, recently of Vanderbilt University. Deacon Michael shared with us what he is hearing from the epidemiologists at Vanderbilt, which I found to be quite helpful in an age where too much information can often cloud our minds.

Finally, then, I consulted your Vestry for their prayerful discernment. The Vestry agrees that there are no right answers in how to handle events like this. While some of us might think one way of going forward is better than another, your leadership stands together in the truth that God is with us and that we are called to fulfill our mission by worshipping God with joy and wonder, learning and growing together, and radiating God’s love to all, even amidst significant lifestyle changes. **I therefore share with you the decision to fulfill our scriptural obligation to offer prayer and praises to God on the Lord’s Day by way of “Church at Home.”**

Sunday’s services at 8am and 10am will not take place as normal. Instead, we will offer one service of Morning Prayer, via Facebook Live at 10am. Bulletins and the Lesson Plans that Work materials used in Children’s Church will be emailed to every family on our congregational mailing list. If you normally receive the Window via USPS, the bulletin will come to you through the mail. We invite everyone to pray Morning Prayer with us, with or without the live stream, at 10am on Sunday. As we say in the Eucharistic Prayer each week, we believe that our prayers are joined with “angels and

archangels and all the company of heaven,” and there is no reason to believe that even in our own homes, our praises won’t be joined together for the glory of God. A separate mailing will help you navigate our online gathering. Please stay tuned.

The office will remain open, but other temporary changes to our common life include:

1. Saturday’s Youth Confirmation Class is postponed.
2. Sunday’s service of Choral Evensong is postponed.
3. Due to WKU’s extended Spring Break, Episcopal Campus Ministry’s regular meeting and retreat are both cancelled the week of March 16th.
4. Wednesday Community Lunch will move to a brown bag to-go lunch model.
5. Wednesday Healing Eucharist is cancelled until at least April 15th.

Gatherings of small groups like the EfM, Wednesday Morning Prayer, Centering Prayer, Churches United in Christ HELP Ministry, and Episcopal Campus Ministry are asked to make their own decisions as to whether to meet and to make necessary adjustments to allow for social distancing.

As you can tell, these decisions do not come lightly. As I said on Sunday, we are a people of hope that conquers fear. However, I do believe that it is incumbent upon us as a community of faith to model healthy behavior. This is especially true because, as we know all too well, so many of our members, who show up any time the doors are open, meet one or more of the vulnerable criteria. We are taking this unprecedented step alongside other community partners like WKU, State Street UMC, and First Christian Church for the welfare of us all. I invite your prayers for our leaders, for health care workers and first responders, and for the ongoing mission and ministry of Christ Episcopal Church.

As life goes on in other ways, at the grocery store, at work, or in the doctor’s office, please do what you can to keep us all healthy.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (about the time it takes to say the Lord’s Prayer). Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol will do if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

I’ll close with a prayer that we use every Wednesday during our service of Holy Eucharist with Prayers for Healing. It is a prayer that I will be praying daily in the days to come. I invite you to pray with me.

Generous God, we give you thanks for your beloved Jesus Christ, in whom you have shared the beauty and pain of human life. Look with compassion upon all for whom we pray, and strengthen us to be your instruments of healing in the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steve", written in dark ink.