



Dear St. John's Family,

March 13, 2020

Here we are at a crossroads for our community. Like many of you, I have found myself completely consumed by the events unfolding around the COVID-19 pandemic. I've scrolled Facebook, Twitter, and the news more times than I can count. My heart has gotten heavy, my anxiety high, and my mind racing about the what if's and then to be honest, I've had moments of doubt – wondering what's the big deal? Truth be told, how to deal with a pandemic was not a course offered at my seminary.

I could sense the news was wreaking havoc on my spirit, so yesterday I went for a walk and I prayed. I prayed for guidance and wisdom. I prayed for medical professionals and those most vulnerable. I prayed for our leaders and those who are making difficult decisions that effect the lives of so many. And then I breathed, and I remembered that Christ is in the midst of all of this. Christ is present in our desire to take care of those in greatest need. Christ is found in the difficult decisions to not meet in large gatherings because every life really does matter. Christ is in our care and concern for hospital workers, those who can't afford to take time off from work, and those desperate to protect the ones they love.

I won't pretend to be a scientist or to understand most of what is happening in our world right now, but I will tell you what I do know. I know that "nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God." As Paul states in Romans 8:38, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come" – might we add: not fear, nor panic, not complacency, or COVID-19, or anything else for that matter. I pray that truth makes each of you breathe a little easier in the coming days and weeks.

As many of you know, the CDC has recommended we eliminate large public gatherings for a short period of time. Like many churches in the country, I have decided, in consultation with our vestry, staff, and medical professionals within our parish community, to suspend public worship and all parish wide activities effective immediately. Like the school systems, we will refrain from meeting in large groups through the remainder of March. This decision has been made to slow the speed of this virus. As the baptized members of Christ's body, we are called to seek and serve Christ in all people, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Our hope is we will be back to regular worship on April 5th. As this situation remains fluid, we will keep you apprised of any changes. Your clergy and staff will continue working from the office and are available to you to address any concerns, prayer requests, or conversations you would like to have. In addition to our office staff, we will continue to assist those in need through our food pantry and will monitor the use of our facilities by our support groups.

In the meantime, we invite you to consider this an opportunity for growth and transformation in this unprecedented 21st century "desert." Consider how the Holy Spirit is working in the midst of this tumultuous time and how we can live more fully into our mission to Grow in God, Act in Service and Witness in Love. Our goal is to remain connected throughout these two weeks in a variety of ways. On the next page you will find a list of suggestions for how we can stay connected and we invite you to contact us with other suggestions you may have. Know you are loved deeply and prayed for often.

God's Peace,

Amanda+

GROW IN GOD, ACT IN SERVICE, WITNESS IN LOVE

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THE MINISTRY OF CONNECTION IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19

Streaming Services:

- This Sunday, March 15 at 11:00, AM tune into the Washington National Cathedral to hear Presiding Bishop Michael Curry. Tune into: [Washington National Cathedral March 15, 2020](#)
- The staff will be working on worship material for your viewing pleasure from the comforts of your couch. Stay tuned....

Social Media:

- Paul will be uploading a variety of Lenten hymns and musical pieces to our social media accounts for your personal devotion.
- We will maintain an active Facebook page with meditations, prayers, and information.

The Ministry of Writing:

- Parish Pen Pals: Imagine if every person in this parish wrote a note to someone else.

Prayer Opportunities:

- Spend a few moments each day, browsing the parish directory and say a prayer for a few individuals or families.
- If you would like to pray in the solitude of the church during the work week, please contact the church office.

Sunday School:

- Check out Buildingfaith.org for tons of great activities and ideas for kids.
- Read the gospel reading as a family each Sunday: [lectionarypage.net](#)

Giving:

- Your giving continues to remain important to the life and vitality of our parish. We will continue meeting the needs of our community as long as the resources are available. There are a number of ways to give which include: mailing pledge payments to the office, signing up for ACH, or through our website at: <https://stjohns-lancaster.org/> (look for the give tab). Thank you for your continual support of the mission and ministry of St. John's.

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