

## Fr. Doug's Weekly Message

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One week ago, we were just beginning to feel the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on our local community. Since that time, the situation has continued to evolve and the latest guidance from the CDC is urging all Americans to refrain from gathering in groups larger than 50 people for the next 8 weeks. The full ramifications of this guidance for local congregations is not yet fully known, but it is clear that most churches will remain closed for the near term, which will most likely include Holy Week. Today, I will be joining other faith leaders from South Florida on a conference call with the Governor's office. This will be an opportunity for clergy to pray together and hear from our civic and health leaders about how to best serve our community during this time. Our local Episcopal clergy are also in constant contact with each other and our Bishop.

### **New "Virtual Church" Website**

Since much our interaction has moved online, we have created a new "Virtual Church" website – [www.goodshepvirtual.org](http://www.goodshepvirtual.org). This new site will be the place where you can go to find many important resources that will help us stay connected during this time when we are unable to meet face to face. These resources include:

- Weekly Messages and Videos
- Recordings of Sunday Worship Services
- Weekly Bulletins
- Order of Service for Daily Morning Prayer
- Additional Prayer Resources
- Youth Group Resources
- Outreach Opportunities

This "Virtual Church" website will be a valuable tool as we seek to support one another and strengthen our faith through these unsettling times.

### **Online Giving Opportunities**

The health crisis related to COVID-19 has now also become an economic crisis that is quickly affecting the daily lives of millions of Americans. I am sensitive to the needs of our local community and all of us at Good Shepherd are seeking to be a source of hope and solace in the midst of a very anxious world. Although our congregations are closed to public gatherings, God's church is not closed, and we are charged to be the presence of Christ in the world now more than ever. The ongoing support of our members is essential if we are to continue this important work in our community. Many of you have indicated that you are going to mail or drop off your offerings. You can also visit our church website and click on the "Giving" tab to make a gift online.

## **Holy Week and Beyond**

Finally, as I mentioned above, it is becoming clear that we will not be able to hold public worship services during Holy Week and Easter. Our staff is working hard to ensure that we will be able to offer online worship for the traditional services of Holy Week and I will be recording additional prayer and devotional videos to accompany those services. As we look beyond Holy Week and Easter, it is difficult to know when our congregations will be able to resume normal operations. We will continue to convey the most current information through these weekly updates and other communication channels.

I want to leave you with a prayer that we have been praying every day this week as part of our Morning Prayer services. It is a prayer that is especially appropriate for these times of uncertainty.

*This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Jesus. Amen.*

May God bless you always!

In Christ,  
Doug+