

Fr. Doug's Weekly Message

Thursday, March 26, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the midst of these strange and uncertain times, I am praying that each of us will know the peace of Christ that passes all understanding. Over the past few weeks, I have been struck by the fact that in all of our Sunday gospel readings, Jesus encounters those who are alone and isolated. Jesus encounters Nicodemus who comes *alone* in the darkness of night. Jesus encounters a woman who comes *alone* to draw water in the middle of the day. Jesus encounters a man born blind who sits *alone* on the street corner begging for alms. In each of these encounters, Jesus brings life, hope, and healing. In each of these encounters, Jesus makes known his presence; he brings God's peace, God's *shalom*, God's wholeness. In these times when many of us are feeling isolated and disconnected, we are reminded that Jesus comes to us in the midst of our fear and confusion. His peace overcomes our anxiety. Jesus stands in our midst as the One who came among us and chose to enter into our human experience of brokenness and isolation in order to reconcile us to God and each other.

None of us knows precisely what the coming weeks will bring, but here is what we do know. **Our Bishop has directed all of our churches and schools to remain closed through at least April 15.** Consequently, we will be continuing to develop additional ways for us remain connected through our online presence. Here are some important updates regarding new opportunities to connect with and support one another.

Good Shep CONNECT: Let's Talk

Beginning this Monday, I will be hosting a virtual time each week for conversation and reflection. This time of connection will be hosted through Zoom, an online platform for meetings. If you would like to participate in this online gathering, please RSVP by clicking [here](#). We will send you an invitation to join the meeting along with instructions on how to use the Zoom application.

Helping One Another

In addition to our online and digital connections, we are also reaching out by telephone to those who do not have computers or internet access. Over the course of the next few weeks, there will be those in our community who will need assistance with trips to the grocery store, picking up prescriptions, and other small errands. If you need assistance, please let us know by visiting our Virtual Church website and clicking on the Outreach page. You can also email or call the church office, and we will do our best to make arrangements to provide help.

Prayers for Teachers and Students

Next week, teachers and students will begin to implement an entirely new educational model as they transition to online learning. Please take some time to pray for all of our teachers, students, and parents as they enter into these uncharted waters. Especially pray for Dr. Marshall and the staff of Good Shepherd School. I have posted specific prayers for our children and youth in the Prayer section of our Virtual Church website.

A Word about Holy Week

Finally, it is now clear that we will not be able to gather for public worship for the great liturgies of Holy Week and Easter. Never would I have imagined that our church buildings would be closed during the holiest time of the year. Of course, while our buildings are closed, the church of God continues its mission of prayer, worship, and service in the name of Jesus. We are the church! We are God's beloved community! Jesus is present among us wherever we are! Next

week, you will receive an Easter letter from me, which will include additional information about virtual Holy Week services and other opportunities to engage during this important season.

Please be safe and continue to follow the guidance of our local government and health officials. Continue to pray for and support one another. And continue to follow Jesus in all you do!

May God bless you always!

In Christ,
Doug+

What You Need to Know

Virtual Church

If you have not visited our new Virtual Church website, please go to www.goodshepvirtual.org. You can find links to recordings of weekly services, resources for daily prayer, and other important ways we can stay connected during this time of social distance.

Daily Morning Prayer

We gather virtually for everyday for Morning Prayer on www.facebook.com/goodsheponline. You can access an Order of Service for Morning Prayer on the Virtual Church website.

Online Giving

During this time when we are not able to gather for public worship, it is more important than ever that we continue to support our mission and ministry through online giving. Please visit the Giving page on our virtual website for more information - www.goodshepvirtual.org/giving.

Office Hours

Per the directive of our Bishop, all our church buildings are closed to public use. The staff is fully equipped to work remotely from home and will continue to check phone messages daily.
