



# EMMANUEL

## EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Beloved Saints of God,

Peace be with you. I was very glad to have spent this past Sunday with so many of you. You will recall that on this past Sunday I mentioned that the situation regarding COVID-19 is fluid and that things were likely to change as far as our schedule. Things have changed.

On Sunday night the CDC recommended that all gatherings of 50 people or more be suspended for 8 weeks, and on Monday afternoon President Trump recommended that all gatherings over 10 people be suspended for the next two weeks. Therefore, in order to comply with the best information we have, I, in consultation with Emmanuel's Vestry and Wardens, have decided to suspend public worship for at least the next two weeks. In order to best follow the CDC recommendations, after those two weeks we will reappraise our schedule. This was not an easy decision for reasons which will become clear later in this letter.

The following represents the changes that will be made immediately:

- All public worship will be suspended for the next two weeks. This includes weekday liturgies. Our intention is to have services streaming or otherwise available online per our regular worship schedule. 8:00 am, 10:15 am and 5:00 pm. Details as to how to stream this content are forthcoming.
- Sunday based Christian formation is likewise suspended although leaders are strongly encouraged to keep contact with students. Fr. David is looking into ways to maintain Christian Education via the web.
- Per the reports of Lay Eucharist Visitors (LEV) Eucharistic Visits will be suspended until such time as elder care facilities give us the all clear.
- All parish-based community functions are also suspended, which includes our rehearsals for Bell Choir, Men's Schola, and Church Choir. This also includes Lenten Suppers and our Parish workday scheduled for March 28<sup>th</sup>.
- In as much as it is possible, Fr. David and Sue will be doing the lion's share of their work from home in order to observe social distancing. If you need either of us, please email or leave a voicemail as both will be checked daily.
- Afternoons at Emmanuel will continue to mirror the schedule of Orange County Public Schools, with full knowledge that the situation will change as well.
- All other community functions have been asked to be compliant with government recommendations which include Boy Scouts, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Audubon Park Garden District.
- Beyond the next two weeks, our schedule is uncertain. Leadership needs to be creative as we step into the next season. Holy Week, for example, is very soon. While it pains us to reconsider the traditional schedule, we feel it prudent to be open to courses of action that keep health and public safety at the fore.

As I mentioned, this was a very difficult set of decisions to make. Part of my own vocation as a Priest is to be present with the people to be a living reminder of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Limiting our exposure to one another is a fact of our common life in response to COVID-19. Even so, in all candor, it is deeply painful to consider life separated from you and our beloved neighborhood partners in Audubon

Park. Therefore, I hope that you will read these changes as born from deep concern for our community's safety, and covet your prayers, patience, and charity. As the crisis unfolds in front of us, I still believe we are called to be Christ's light to the world, and we await God's wisdom on how to best and most faithfully live into that call.

Here are a few things I would really love to see, so that we may take care of each other:

- Take responsibility for at least three people, praying for them, and calling to check in on them, and helping me out by letting him know how folks are doing, especially those particularly at risk and in eldercare facilities.
- Starting Friday, the parish church will be open weekdays from 3 pm to 6 pm for quiet prayer and meditation, with a ten-person maximum for at least the next two weeks.
- So long as there are willing volunteers to help with the Sunday live stream, I plan on consecrating Eucharistic Elements. I would love to be invited into homes for very small (less than 10), brief gatherings to administer the Sacrament. If you are interested in hosting such a gathering please let Sue Grosso know - [Admin@emmanuelepiscopal.net](mailto:Admin@emmanuelepiscopal.net)
- I would be remiss if I didn't remind you of options for online giving ([Realm Giving Online](#)). Speaking honestly, having to suspend public worship for a length of time puts us into unclear financial waters, which we know is true of so many individuals and businesses around us. Thank you for any and all of your faithful generosity.

In closing, I want you to know that you and your families are in my prayers, that God has not abandoned us, and that it is perhaps providential that included in this Sunday's readings are the words of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:

The LORD is my shepherd; \*

I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; \*

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; \*

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his  
Name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil; \*

for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of  
mine enemies; \*

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days  
of my life, \*

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Again, I await your prayers, patience, and charity and the opportunity to see you again in person.

With Love in Christ,

-D+