

March 12th, 2020

Dear Friends and Family of St. Mark's:

Last night we received word from Bishop Marc instructing all parishes in the Diocese to suspend all public services through the end of March. This includes the Daily Office and weekday masses, as well as our principal Sunday celebrations.

Instead we will offer a Livestream on the internet at 10am on Sundays for the time being via this [LINK](#), with just Fr. Blake, both wardens, George Emblom, and a server or two. This is to follow the strictest, <10 person guidance from the CDC, as well as to do what we can to continue the worship of God in this place. The Eucharist is not just the heart of our religious practice, but it is also the best means we have as Christians of pleading the death and resurrection of Christ for the healing of the world. We invite all of you to join us via LiveStream, and add your prayers to the ones being offered at St. Mark's. Though we will be apart physically, we are still one in the Spirit, who searches the mind of God and binds the whole Body in one.

This is not welcome news for any of us: there are lots of reasons we come to church on Sunday morning, and being prevented from doing so, even for health and safety reasons, is always unsettling. But knowing what we know now about the spread of this disease, it is much the better part of valor to be cautious: churches and synagogues have already been epicenters of outbreak in the United States and around the world, and whatever we can do to prevent this here in Berkeley, we ought to do.

To that end, we will further suspend all non-essential meetings, forums, classes, and fellowship groups, and we will suspend the laying-on of hands as well — with the one exception, if the clergy are called upon to minister to the dying. Hopefully a super-abundance of caution will help lead to a swift end to the danger. This does not mean all parish activity will cease: Hot Meals, for example, will continue, but by making and distributing bag lunches rather than a sit-down meal. Likewise, work continues in the parish office, coordinating our response to the needs of the present moment as well as the usual preparations for programs and events coming up, and the normal round of financial tasks and obligations. It simply means we are taking all necessary steps to minimize the risk of spreading this disease, which requires reducing personal contact and exposure as much as possible.

As you know, St. Mark's has three hourly employees whose livelihood is directly at risk from unplanned closures: Toni our Parish Administrator, Joel our Sexton, and Shelby our Childcare Coordinator. Thanks to your generosity in this year's pledge campaign, we are happy to share that, as the need arises, we can continue to pay them as if it were business as usual. That may change for all our staff, the Rector included, if the current crisis continues too long unabated; but for now, and for the foreseeable future, our staff need not worry about St. Mark's being able to make payroll. Thank you to everyone whose continued generosity makes this possible. We are more dependent than ever on your gifts. If you are in the habit of giving your pledge by plate on Sunday, you might consider doing so online in the coming weeks, through the widget on our website (<https://stmarksberkeley.org/donate/>)

Members of our Young Adults group have volunteered to help if any of our parish are in vulnerable populations and require assistance getting basic necessities like food or toiletries. If you need such assistance, please be in touch with us directly or with Toni, and we can connect you with the YADAs. Obviously this would not eliminate all risk of exposure to Coronavirus, but it would be a good way to limit your own exposure to large groups. Thank you to the YADAs for volunteering this important service!

Finally, even though we are prevented, for the time being, from offering public prayer and worship, it is still entirely possible to keep a holy Lent. In tomorrow's Lion, we will be sharing some resources to help you join Fr. Blake in privately praying the Daily Office, and as Lent continues, we will be offering some guided reading with prompts for learning and meditation, in addition to whatever new guidance comes from the Diocese and our local health officials. Attached below is a link from Dr. Heather Readhead, with some helpful advice on what to do if you think you might have the Coronavirus, or if you think you may have been exposed to it.

At the moment we are proceeding as if Holy Week and Easter will continue as planned. Our preacher for the Triduum, The Rev'd Canon Jeremy Davies, has been in touch to say his journey from the UK has not yet been canceled, and he is looking forward to being with us. We are looking forward too, especially for the chance it will be to see all of you again at the altar.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to be in touch with either of us, or with Toni in the office.

You all remain close in our prayers and our affections. We remain confident, full of hope, that in due time we will again say together, "I will go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness; and upon the harp will I give thanks unto thee, O God, my God."

Yours faithfully,
Fr. Blake and Lisa Key
Rector and Senior Warden

Again, here is the [LINK](#) to the Livestream that will begin around 9:50AM

****NOTE:** You do NOT need to have a Facebook account in order to watch the Livestream. Just follow the link, and the video will start when we go live: starting at about 9:50am.***

For more information, here is a link to Coronavirus "what to do": <https://bit.ly/2xyITjo>