

**Dear Ones,**

These are truly amazing times. And they come with the difficult challenges and the grace-filled potential of all truly amazing times. If nothing else, we are certainly learning, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that we are all deeply and profoundly connected. We are one, even as the God Who we worship is One. Our main task right now is to love, and pray, and care for one another, and especially for the smallest, weakest and poorest among us.

To that end, over the past two days we have held a series of meetings with the leaders of our various outreach ministries, after which the Vestry met in emergency session, and we held a couple of follow up meetings with church staff. I wanted to take this opportunity to keep you informed of our efforts and deliberations at this point.

**Bishop Stokes has ordered that all public worship services be suspended. Therefore, there will be no Sunday services held at St. Mary's until we receive permission from the Bishop to resume them.** I will make every effort to provide spiritual care by doing some prayer services (Scripture & Sermon) every Sunday morning at 10 am, which will be broadcast live via Facebook Live, and remain on the church's Facebook site. We will also link these to the parish website. I will be making alternative plans for Holy Week and Easter, and will advise you of those. Watch for my Easter letter and for Constant Contacts that focus on our spiritual life together during these extra-challenging times. We can and will stay connected, no matter what!

Please remember that the Chapel is always open for private prayer, and I will leave some prayers and spiritual resources there for your use and taking.

**Mary's Table** will continue to serve meals, on a take-out basis only, from 4 to 6 pm every Thursday. Folks will be welcomed to step into the foyers and receive a meal to take home, along with an included message of love, and encouragement and support, and some extra bread of course!

**St. Gregory's Food Pantry** will continue to operate on Monday through Friday from 10 am to 12 noon. Rather than clients coming in for food, Pantry volunteers will take phone orders, pack up boxes and bags and schedule a time for the client to be met at the door with their order. Walk-ins will continue to be honored. The office's intercom system will be used to keep volunteers indoors and clients outdoors, for the time being.

**IHN** clients will be served by volunteers at their Day Center and not at St. Mary's in the immediate future. Arrangements are being finalized with their Director.

**All 12-step programs** will continue to be welcomed to meet in Farnsworth Hall. They will be advised to observe all the guidelines and recommendations we have from our Public Health authorities. They will be asked to observe all social distancing measures, refrain from serving food and beverages, and refrain from using the kitchen area at all.

**Church Staff** will continue to serve you behind the scenes, and we are always here if you need us. JoAnn will continue working with the choir, and we may be able to collaborate on some video-taped services. Cherisse will continue working, but mainly from home. George will continue to clean during his usual part-time hours. His efforts are more needed than ever right now, as we will continue using the buildings and facilities to serve others. St. Gregory's Pantry will also be hiring an additional part-time cleaner to be sure that everything is consistently and fastidiously cleaned and disinfected.

Vestry members and I will be reaching out to all our elderly and homebound members on a regular basis. We hope to keep in touch with everyone to see that they are ok, have everything they need, and do not feel isolated or afraid. Please let us know if you know of anyone who needs anything at all and we will do our very best to help them.

Finally, the Vestry has voted to continue paying church staff during this uncertain time. We are very grateful for that. We will also do our level best to continue paying all our bills and keeping everything on track financially. Once you have cared for yourselves and for your loved ones, please consider keeping up with your pledges and donations to St. Mary's as much as you are able. We want to be able to carry on during this difficult time as much as is possible. The love and support we share with others is needed now more than ever! And we certainly are already looking forward to the time when things can get "back to normal" with regard to our shared life together.

The most oft-repeated phrase in the Bible is "Do not fear!"  
So ... Do not fear! God is with us. And we are with one another.  
No matter what!

**Praying for health and healing for all, with much love,  
Victoria+**

**Isaiah 43:1-5, adapted**

Thus says the Lord,  
Who created you, Who formed you:  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by your name, you are mine.  
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
When you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
And the flame shall not consume you.  
For I am the Lord your God, the Holy one, your Savior.  
You are precious in my sight and honored, and I love you.  
Do not fear; for I am with you.

**A Prayer**

Loving God,  
You came to us in Jesus  
As one who understands our pain and suffering.  
You came to us in Jesus  
As one who heals others. All others.  
You came to us in Jesus  
As one who is with us no matter what.  
Come to us now.  
Understand us, heal us, and be with us now.  
The suffering of your earth-bound children is great.  
Many of us are sick, some of us are dying, all of us are afraid.  
Grant us wisdom with which to combat this present crisis.  
Grant us compassion with which to serve one another.  
Grant us courage with which to encourage and support each other.  
Grant us love with which to reach out across  
Every self-imposed boundary to care for one another.  
For now we see ... with eyes wide-opened by your grace ...  
That we are one, as You are One.  
Come to us now and stay  
With your One Beloved.  
Your Christ.  
For we are crucified,  
And we await our resurrection  
With all the hope your love inspires in us. Amen.