



33 Chestnut Street, Post Office Box 631, Camden, ME 04843

March 14, 2020

Dear People of St Thomas',

After consulting with other Episcopal clergy, our bishop and our leadership here at St. Thomas', I have decided that **beginning next Sunday, March 22, 2020**, St. Thomas' will suspend all worship. **After Services tomorrow, March 15**, we are closing the building to all meetings and groups for the next couple of weeks. We will reevaluate the situation prior to Holy Week. This is a temporary measure to prevent wider spread of the Coronavirus and protect the most vulnerable in our parish and communities. I know this will disrupt our parish life as we discontinue all weekly services, parish meetings, small group meetings, Bible study, EfM, and the Lenten Noon Series, in addition to closing the building to outside groups like AA, VoXX and Xi-Gong.

I understand that many of you may feel – and be – cut off during this disruption, so the pastoral care team would like you to call into the church if you have needs that are not being met. Many of our local towns are also putting volunteer groups into effect. Call your local Police Department if you have needs or would like to volunteer. I will be checking in on you as I continue to work, both at the church and at home.

This disease moves rapidly between people and the precaution to close comes as we learn that minimizing direct contact at the beginning of the spread slows down the infection rate. I do see this difficult time as an opportunity for our faith community to try innovations in how we connect. The church has always reached out to help in times of crisis and worked to ensure all people are cared for. In the coming weeks we will see how this will unfold.

We are working on streaming my sermons weekly either by video or audio only. We will also post live streaming options on the website from our area, and nationally. We are always connected through prayer and the internet! I will keep you posted as we determine daily and weekly service options online. I hope you all have your prayer books handy! If you don't you can download it onto your phone or computer. In a real pinch I could bring one to you.

The parish office will be open Sundays and Wednesdays from 9-12, but Susie and I will mostly be working remotely. The most important thing – if you are exposed to this virus it may take three days or so to manifest symptoms. During this time, you are contagious to all you meet. Please limit exposure to crowds, and if you have any symptoms of fever, please stay home.

I am praying for you all daily. I am always available by text and phone (231-2411) and by email at lisasmithfry@gmail.com. With God's grace, we'll get through this.

God bless you and see you tomorrow.

Lisa+