

March 18, 2020

## **Worship Services Temporarily Suspended**

All worship services and events are temporarily suspended at St. Christopher's beginning March 19, 2020. Please check back frequently on the St. Christopher's website for updates regarding returning regular worship and other activities.

Dear Family and Friends of St. Christopher's:

Our faith family, community, state, country and world have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. People of all ages, ethnicities, and socio-economic groups have been directly impacted by this reality—especially the many who suffer from lack of basic needs, or families with children and those whose jobs are in jeopardy due to mandatory closures.

After many helpful conversations, consulting with public health leaders, intentional prayer, and some agonizing, the decision was made to temporarily suspend all worship services and gatherings at St. Christopher's. Parish leadership will continue to closely monitor this rapidly evolving public health situation and do our best to communicate with you regularly as this event continues to unfold. The suspension of these core faith community activities at this time is essential to our corporate and individual health. I truly wished for worship to continue at St. Christopher's, but the overwhelming necessity to maintain public health best practices for individuals and the greater community in response to this pandemic event required this response—it is the right thing to do at this time.

I am engaged in ongoing conversations and updates on how to best respond to this pandemic event with state and local public health officials, public safety partners, elected officials, and ECMN Bishop Prior and sister faith communities. We are ever aware of new best practices recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Minnesota Departments of Health, Public Safety, Human Services, and Education. Knowing that these agencies are working tirelessly to mitigate, prevent, respond, and recover from this event gives me comfort and assurance.

Christians have historically been compassionate and caring leaders, and are even today, as we face this newest health threat. We are here to care for others, as God cares for all of us.

We intend for worship and faith family connections to be continued at St. Christopher's. This is a topic of ongoing conversation and action by Wardens, Vestry, and all members of our parish. It will take many different forms as we continue to try new and innovative ways to maintain and build upon personal connections. We will be continuing to post sermons on our website, pass along the lectionary readings for each Sunday, and experiment with video conferencing technologies to assist in relationship-building.

Pastoral care will continue to be provided by clergy and staff. Please know that we are always available to you. Vestry members, staff, and others are already working hard to develop connecting and caring ministry options, such as outreach phone call trees, electronic

meditation moment reflections, and video streaming of worship and sacred music. We will also tap into other resource links such as St. Mark's Cathedral and the National Cathedral weekly worship services. Please consider being part of these outreach opportunities or propose new ones!

Also, please remember that even though we are not gathering in-person on a regular basis at St. Christopher's, the financial support needs of the parish continue. Ministries, staff salaries, and the building needs continue to be dependent entirely upon the giving of our members. If you have questions on how to continue in this important stewardship involvement, please contact our parish administrator, Ruth Thillen at 651-633-4589 or [office@stchristophers-mn.org](mailto:office@stchristophers-mn.org)

Lastly, understand and be assured that *"The Church Is Not Closed!"* Our operation is temporarily changed during this health crisis. Please know that you and your family are in my prayers. I look forward to seeing and experiencing how the Holy Spirit continues to work in all of our lives and each other in the days and weeks ahead.

Peace and all good.

Randy+