



March 14, 2020

Dear Friends,

I am writing to clarify where we are at St. John's in light of the **coronavirus pandemic**. This is only two pages, so please read it all.

It goes without saying that this should be a subject of constant and fervent prayer for those who are directly impacted by coronavirus, those suffering severe economic impact from the many cancellations and closures, and our government, health and church leaders as they continue to evaluate and respond to the daily changes in this situation.

I believe that we are under two moral obligations as Christians. First, Christians have a responsibility to serve and love even in the face of grave personal risk. We are to "lay down our lives" for the sake of others. For this reason, Christians have long been at the forefront of compassionate care in the face of epidemics throughout history. [Click here for an interesting summary.](#)

Second, we need to conduct ourselves in a way that does not bring undue risk to others. Our response to things like the coronavirus (and other health crises in the future) cannot simply be about self-preservation but about the protection of others. I believe and trust the advice of public health professionals that even those who are not likely to be seriously endangered by this virus have a serious and critical role to help slow the progress of the pandemic, helping to keep things at a level that our medical system can effectively handle.

Being 61 years old, I am in the age range that has enhanced risk related to coronavirus, however, I also know that I am generally very healthy and have a stout immune system. I do not actually think I am in much danger of serious complications should I contract coronavirus. However, I need to be careful to protect those I come into contact with and that I do not contribute to the burdening of our medical system.

At least three Dioceses have cancelled all public worship (Washington DC, Maryland, Virginia). Our own Bishop Brewer has not taken this step but is leaving it to the local parish, supporting whatever decision we make. However, that could change as the situation continues to develop.

Having discussed this situation with our Sr. Warden, Lee Steininger, I wish to make the following clear:

- At this time, nothing is being cancelled. We will have Sunday worship at 7:45 & 10 a.m. and other meetings will continue as scheduled.
- Please refrain from our normal habits of hugs and handshakes.
- Those who are sick or have underlying medical conditions should either skip group events at church or be extremely careful about participating by avoiding all physical contact, bringing a supply of sanitizing wipes and maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others.
- If you have been diagnosed with coronavirus or your physician has ordered a coronavirus test for you or a member of your household, do not come to events at church until cleared

by your doctor.

- Extra care will be taken in the cleaning and preparation of the church facility.
- Communion will be administered in the bread only as it is easier to be assured of the cleanliness. In addition, we will use communion wafers rather than baked bread as this requires less handling of the bread.
- Communion ministers will continue to use hand sanitizer before handling any vessels containing the bread. The communion wafers will be covered with a linen purificator (napkin) until administered.
- The passing of the peace should be done without physical contact beyond the members of your immediate household. Hand waves, head nods or just a word of peace are adequate expressions.
- **VERY IMPORTANT:** We are forming a new team to help and advise in dealing with coronavirus as well future crises that may come up. Please let me know if you would be interested in being involved, especially if you have a special expertise (medical professionals, first responders, those with public health experience, communication professionals, those with related policy administration experience, those with expertise in dealing with financial impacts, etc.).
- This is an opportunity for us to enhance our ability to care for one another and our community. Additionally we will begin exploring opportunities to make our worship services available online via Facebook live or similar vehicles.
- Please remember that even if you are not at church, the church's expenses continue unabated.

Any future updates will be disseminated by the following methods:

- 1) St. Johns Chat email list. Please contact Fr. Eric if you are not subscribed and would like to be.
- 2) The weekly eNews email list.
- 3) The St. John's Facebook page.

Thank you for being a part of St. John's and for your prayer and support!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Turner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Rev. Eric Turner
Rector