

March 14, 2020

Friends in Christ---

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (*2 Cor. 13:14*)

Anxiety is high in our world, perhaps for very good reason. The USA seeks to mitigate the coronavirus through testing, quarantines, travel bans, and vaccine development. The ELCA seeks to mitigate the coronavirus through hygiene practices, media, and faithful time apart from one another.

Both Presiding Bishop Eaton and Synodical Bishop Suárez have issued statements within the past 48 hours. [A link to Presiding Bp. Eaton's statement is here.](#) [A link to Bp. Suárez' statement is here.](#) As a result of these two statements, and through much prayer, the JOY Lutheran Church Council has done deliberate and deep discernment.

Out of love and from deep concern for those who gather as JOY, for those who come to us as visitors and friends, and particularly for those most vulnerable to the virus, we have decided to take faithful, immediate actions:

- **There will be no public, worship at JOY for the remainder of March, beginning after the March 15th Sunday Service. This includes Sunday worship, Lenten evening prayer services, PJB service, Five Tough Questions, etc.**
- **All events, committee meetings, etc., and activities are also suspended. This includes soup suppers, fellowship hour, WELCA Circles, etc.**

Until public worship and church activities resume, avail yourselves of the following:

- The Sunday sermon and readings will be made available via our website. The JOY website (<https://www.joylutheranelca.com>) has great value to our congregation and this is a time when it can serve us very well. Consideration is being given to livestreaming the sermon. If this solidifies, then we will share that link when available.
- For those desiring to receive Holy Communion individually, as a couple, or as a family, I will be available during our regular Sunday morning worship hour at JOY. I am also available for pastoral conversation, for confession & absolution, and for company if you feel lonely or isolated. Simply call me to schedule a time: #321.312.7339.
- Committees with an urgent need to meet during this suspension, are invited to call me to schedule either a Google Hangout, Skype, or Zoom videoconference.

- Until decided otherwise, the office shall remain open from 9a-2p, Weds and Thurs. However, we ask that you not drop by unless you've called ahead and given us a chance to acknowledge that we are aware of your coming – office #321.951.0166. Email (joylutheranpb@gmail.com) is an effective means to reach out. To email Pr. Bryant directly, use prjdbryant4tide@gmail.com.

- If you have not already done so, sign up to receive Tidings of JOY, our newsletter, via email. This will help keep us connected.

- Please mail your offerings and contributions directly to the church: JOY Lutheran Church, 3174 Jupiter Blvd SE, Palm Bay, FL 32909. Our expenses do not suspend, even if our time together is temporarily suspended. Your generosity is appreciated.

Anxiety is high in our world, for now we find ourselves wondering, “is a cough just a cough?” This is draining. This is wearying. And, this is scary. The tragic thing about being scared is that it can fool us into forgetting *who-we-are* and *Whose-we-are*. We are the children of God; we belong to God.

Verse four of the Swedish hymn, Children of the Heavenly Father, assures us that, “Though He giveth or He taketh, God His children ne'er forsaketh; His, the loving purpose solely, To preserve them, pure and holy.”

To the degree that one is able, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (*Philippians 4:6-7*)

God bless and keep you,
JDB+
Pr. J. David Bryant+