



11 March 2020

Dear Members and Friends of Immanuel,

Our Bishop has made the decision to suspend all public worship services in the Diocese for the next two Sundays. This is, of course, an attempt to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. As this situation is evolving, this announcement supersedes our plans from earlier this week. The church is not closed, but all Immanuel gatherings of more than just a few people will be suspended. The Diocese will re-evaluate after two weeks about our plans moving forward.

So, we will not have any services, starting with the Eucharist this evening, and including all services this Sunday, March 15th, and March 22nd. This includes the suspension of all educational events and social gatherings.

[Here is a link to the Bishop's announcement.](#)

I have never seen anything like this, but it is clear that a chief weapon we must wield against this disease right now is social distancing, which makes it much more difficult for the virus to spread between people. We aim, as a community, for health and abundance of life in Christ. That most certainly includes physical health, and sometimes we have to make sacrifices for the common good. I hope and trust that our temporary closures will be a witness towards the well-being not only of our parishioners, but of our larger community. Social distancing is absolutely the opposite of what we normally encourage as a parish and how we live together. We like being together...We need to be together.

I am saddened by this, no question. We are in the middle of Lent, there is so much going on and so much that needs to be done. And yet, God is with us (Immanuel), and all shall be well. There is no one in our parish who has tested positive for the virus and, God willing, may that remain the case.

We will investigate some sort of broadcast on those two Sundays, probably a reading and a simple meditation for the day, along with prayer. We will send out information for how these broadcasts may be accessed.

On a personal level, I hope you find this creates an opportunity for deepening your Lenten experience, through engaging in some quiet reflection, some time of inventory, and especially prayer for those most directly affected.

I also want you to know that I would love to talk with many of you, to pray with you, and to share in this with you. Please email me (ralexander@icoh.net) or call the office number (703.370.6555, ext. 201) and if you don't get me personally, please leave a voicemail and I will get back to you.

These closures will inevitably bring up questions about individual events, some of which will need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Thank God for the community we share; a strong, blessed community that will weather this challenge as it has weathered so many others before.

I leave you with a favorite Psalm of mine, a portion of Psalm 46: (verses 1-4)

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,
and though the mountains be toppled into the depths of the sea;
Though its waters rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble at its tumult.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

God bless you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr.
Rector