

## **Giving Up Worshipping Together for Lent**

I never thought I would ever say such a thing, even as some bad lent joke, but it's no joke.

An hour ago we had a plan in place to worship together this Sunday. But with the rapidly developing responses to the coronavirus pandemic and the closing of all surrounding schools that will take place tomorrow, it seems more than prudent to suspend our Sunday gatherings. As a colleague in Arlington said so well, cancelling Sunday services makes sense not just out of an abundance of caution, but also out of an abundance of love for one other and all of the communities around us. For now, we can love our neighbors by trying to stay away from them as much as possible. It's clear to me that social distancing, which is beginning to happen on a massive scale needs to include the church. Self-protection is a way to slow down the spread of infection or "flatten the curve," buying much needed time to respond to a host of needs that will surely arise in the days and weeks ahead.

Our theology of the cross calls us to see where God might be at work in these anxious and challenging times. What new things might God be doing in our lives and in our world through this pandemic? I believe this will be a time of hope and opportunity. How might we discover new and deeper connections to each other and our Lord in the days ahead?

We have an abundance of ways to connect now without being physically present. For the first time ever we will offer a way to gather virtually via livestream, using this link beginning at 10:30 this Sunday. A Service of the Word will be led by a small group who will gather here on Sunday using much of the service from our Sunday bulletin posted on our website. Find the hymns there and let us sing together in a new way!

In the absence of gathering for a while please check in on each other and share your needs. Feel free to call me and let me know what is going on. My cell phone number is 617-347-3933 for calls or texts. Vicar Samm can be reached at 314-479-4122. Let us pray for and protect the most vulnerable who face greater risks.

I will greatly miss our regular worship on this third Sunday in Lent. I am already bracing myself to show up on Sunday to an empty church. But we will not gather out of fear, but out of love.

Until we meet again in person, I close with the words of Evening Prayer from our book of worship:

"O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

--Yours in Christ, Ross