

So, my friends, my heart is heavy to let you know that we must take a couple of steps backwards now. We were moving ahead in this journey with our outdoor services that we have been planning for every two weeks. For those of us who have felt safe and comfortable to gather for worship, our spirits have been buoyed by our beautiful outdoor service on the South Lawn of the Historic Church. And let me say how proud I am of all of you for wearing your masks, keeping appropriate distances, washing your hands, and RSVPing to the services. The numbers attending have gotten close to 100 at most of these services and even when the weather was “iffy” one Sunday, we had about 60 gather with us. Of course, on Kelly’s last Sunday we had about 160 people in worship.

And so with the Vestry’s concurrence, we have reached the difficult decision to step away from these outdoor, in-person services for the time being. With limited numbers we would have to turn people away who might have wanted to attend, and this just didn’t feel right.

WE CONTINUE TO OFFER OUR 9:00 A.M. LIVE-STREAMED SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE ON OUR YOU-TUBE CHANNEL WHICH IS ALSO AVAILABLE ANYTIME AFTER THAT SO THAT IT GIVES YOU FLEXIBILITY IN WHEN YOU WORSHIP. AND WE CONTINUE TO OFFER COFFEE HOUR AT 10:00 A.M. FOR A TIME OF CONNECTION.

We take a few steps backwards, and we choose safety for ourselves, for those we love and share life, and for any others we might come in contact with to keep from spreading the virus unknowingly. We are doing this for Thanksgiving gatherings...two sisters and their children were to have shared Thanksgiving Dinner with me and my family and we have changed this plan and they will now do their own Thanksgiving celebration. I know many of you are adjusting your plans to be prudent and wise, respecting the volatility and seriousness of this pandemic while also committing to loving your neighbor as yourself and protecting the most vulnerable.

And as our Bishop Susan writes in her meditation for this week, **WE DO NOT LOSE HEART!** Our faith gives us hope and keeps us from despair. And we know that we will gather again. But what we don’t want to realize when we gather then is that someone couldn’t be with us then because we did not make every possible effort we could to prevent the virus’ spread. Friends, we must all be vigilant at this time. This is hard, but it will end. A vaccine is ahead and so we give thanks for that and the front-line treatments being developed. Thinking of all of you and your faithfulness, I do not lose heart! And so we keep on wearing our masks, watching our distance, washing our hands, and limiting our contact with others as we know is best.

This prayer below from Thomas Merton is one I find especially helpful during these days of our journeying. Please know that my love and prayers are with you all. Pax, Andy+

MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me

by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

- Thomas Merton, "Thoughts in Solitude"
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