

## A Pastoral Response to Coronavirus

March 12, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Central to our living faith is God's call to help all people and creation flourish in Holy Love. Recent events related to the COVID-19 pandemic cause us to consider that call in new ways. We respond amid swirling information and whirling emotions. We seek practical plans of action. And we remember God's repeated promise: Do not be afraid. I am with you always.

As we seek a way forward together, first we hold in prayer all who suffer illness and/or grieve loss of a beloved. We bear in God's grace medical professionals and others on "front lines" of treatment, as they love and serve vulnerably beyond self-concern. And we seek wisdom for all people in leadership positions facing choices that impact health and livelihood of others. We believe this service radiates the presence and power of God-with-us!

Finding the right balance of response is surely difficult. Yes, we want to share efforts to prevent further spread of infection. We want to do no harm. We desire what is fair and beneficial to all concerned. To be direct, that means minimizing threat to others' physical health. And as we consider wider circles of ethical relations, we're also mindful of people whose livelihood and basic resources will be lost. Some people feel real threat to life physically. Some people will feel threatened in other ways tangible, vital, even a matter of survival—physically, emotionally, spiritually. And so, we hold in Holy Love schoolchildren for whom safety and nourishment in classrooms is crucial, merchants on a financial edge, persons facing insecurities in basic necessities of food and housing, and so many others for whom social distancing will exacerbate deep loneliness and mental illness. A loving balance of response remains hard amid all our imperfect perceptions and incomplete information.

As we consider life in our congregation, we keep monitoring updates and reevaluating practical plans. Our staff has redoubled sanitation efforts. We've altered protocol for or postponed activities. In all matters, we urge individuals to self-monitor participation. At this time, we'll continue to worship in our sanctuary, gather for classes, and generally be open for business. If thirteen people arrive on Sunday morning we will worship with praise and prayer, seeking illumination, ever grateful for Sacred Grace abounding, ever seeking the reign of Holy Peace. That is, all of life flourishing as God intends. We'll propose changes to bits like passing the peace. We encourage sensitive consideration of others who may feel vulnerable. If you feel susceptible to COVID-19 for whatever reason, again, we support you making wise decisions about ways you participate.

And let's keep open all lines of communication from your hearts and minds to ours. We're ready to listen to your fears and observations. We're ready to share your creativity, care, and determination. We're ready to keep walking in hope, to keep loving in Jesus Christ, together amid this wondrous and wounded and interwoven world.

On behalf of all our staff, grace and peace to you,

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