

Good morning disciples of St. John's,

As the potential for increased spread of COVID-19 continues, St. John's is committed to responding in safe and healthy ways. Yesterday, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf requested cancellation of large events and asked religious leaders to use discretion to limit the spread of the virus. In light of that request, St. John's has suspended all worship services, meetings and activities scheduled between today, Friday, March 13 and Friday, March 27, 2020.

It is our sincere hope that activities scheduled for the weekend following the two-week closure, including worship on Sunday, March 29, will take place, but please watch for emails and website updates with any changes. As changes occur on a county and/or state level, our response may, too.

The church staff will not be keeping regular office hours during the two week closure, however, Pastor Becky is available to any member who has a pastoral need. She can be reached at 215-804-8734. Please call or text at any time.

What can you do at this time to support one another and the community at large?

- Remain calm. Yes, this is a difficult time and the restrictions placed on our community are a struggle for many of us to live into. But anxiety and fear get us nowhere.
- Remain safely in relationship with those around you. Keep in touch with older members of your family and our faith community. Check in on those with health issues. Make sure those you know have what they need at this time and help out in whatever safe ways you are able to. And continue to exercise good hygiene by washing your hands often and remaining isolated if sick.
- Remain in prayer and meditate on God's word. Never discount the power of prayer and Scripture to bring calm and redirect our anxious thoughts. A Sunday worship resource is available within this email for use by individuals or families this weekend. While this guide in no way fills the void of being together as a community, it is our hope that it will provide some spiritual food for the journey.
- Continue to support the work of St. John's even as our regular worship is suspended. Online giving remains available through the St. John's website and you can always mail your gift to St. John's Lutheran Church, 3104 Main Street, Green Lane, PA 18054.

Please know that the building may be closed, but the body of Christ that is St. John's is still alive and active in the world. God is inviting all of us to respond to the needs around us, share the good news, connect with others, grow in faith and pray even in this challenging time.

In closing, we commend to you this prayer for a pandemic, written by Cameron Wiggins Bellm:  
May we who are merely inconvenienced  
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors  
remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home

remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close  
remember those that have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips  
remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market  
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home  
remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,  
let us choose love during this time  
when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,  
let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbor.  
Amen

Sunday Devotion Guide  
March 15, 2020

#### OPENING LITANY

O come let us worship and lift our hearts . . .  
**not because the world is good and last week was awesome,  
but because the earth is the Lord's and everything in it,  
the God of the whole Earth.**

O come let us worship and raise our hands . . .  
**not because our lives are all sweetness and light,  
but because even those who walk in darkness  
can see a great light,  
the Bright and Morning Star**

O come let us worship and bow down . . .  
**not because God gives us what we want,  
but because God gives us what we need –  
the presence of God with us and worship that fills our souls.**

#### PRAYER

Let us pray. God of the present moment, God who in Jesus stills the storm and soothes the frantic heart – bring hope and courage to all who wait or work in uncertainty. Bring hope that you will make them the equal of whatever lies ahead. Bring them courage to endure what cannot be avoided for your will is health and wholeness; you are God, and we need you. Amen

## GOSPEL – John 4:5-42

But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.'

### ***Reflection questions to consider or discuss:***

- What catches your attention in this passage?
- What questions does this passage create for you?
- What do you think God might be saying to you through this passage?

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of living water, send your church beyond boundaries to proclaim your grace. May its witness be a source of refreshment for thirsty souls. Strengthen our voices, that all people can know and believe that Jesus is truly the savior of the world. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of living water, open the hearts of leaders and authorities, that they hear the cries of the suffering and act with compassion toward them. Bring peace to disputed lands and bring reconciliation to people divided by race, culture, or nationality. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of living water, mend the hearts of those who grieve broken relationships, whether by conflict, abuse, divorce, or death. Draw near to all who are ill. Be with our world as we endure this pandemic. Surround us with wise counsel, calm hearts, and common sense. Assure those questioning your presence in the midst of doubt or suffering. Be with all those we name before you now, silently or aloud. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of living water, renew us in the promises of baptism. Join us together in worship, fellowship, and sharing your good news. Embolden us to serve others and to work for justice and peace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of living water, we thank you for those who endured suffering and who now boast in the glory of God. Pour your Holy Spirit into our hearts and give us peace as we live in the hope of our salvation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

#### BENEDICTION

The God of all mercy surround you.  
The God of all peace calm your troubled spirits.  
The God of all hope fill you with hope,  
in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen