



Dear St. John's Family,

In the true nature of Lent, we find ourselves in the wilderness of unknowing. The wardens and I have been holding daily conversations about the safety of our church, school and tenants. Each day has brought new stories, new fears, new facts and new best practices -- and we believe that the time has come to suspend our worship services and close our building.

To quote an often-used phrase these days, we do this out of an abundance of caution. We have no known cases of coronavirus in the school, our church or in the groups that meet in our building. But we believe that it is in the best concern for the greater community that we suspend gathering in person. This has been encouraged and permitted by our own bishops

and the presiding bishop of the greater church.

We do this also out of an abundance of faith. We followers of Jesus are a people of hope. We know that Christ has experienced the same doubt, fears and loss that we now do, and when we calm our hearts, we experience the assurance that the love of God supports us still. We do not need a building to be the church. We do not need the physical bread or wine to be strengthened for the Christian life. We have our faith, our mandate to love as God loved, and we have one another -- even when we are separated by distance.

So, for the next three Sundays we will not meet in person. We will however be able to worship together at the same time online. **Sunday March 15th will be our first closed Sunday.** You can watch a worship service and sermon on our Facebook page at 10 a.m. on Sunday March 15th. If you are a Facebook user you can go to the church page (search St. John's Episcopal Church, Tuckahoe) and watch live or check in later and watch. You can also watch live at 10 a.m. Sunday on our webpage.

If you watch, please hit the heart button or a thumbs up button and offer a prayer or greeting in the comment line. **This small act allows us to connect as congregation.** Next week I will be mailing out a hard copy of our ongoing worship so that you can read along and respond as you watch online. If you are not on Facebook and you'd like help, please call me and I can walk you through setting this up over the phone.

Your vestry is meeting this Sunday and I will be emailing you regularly so that you remain informed about how we will be church together in the coming weeks. But for now, I invite you to a season of prayer. I am forming a virtual prayer circle of those who would like to pray for and be prayed for as we journey this new road called Coronavirus. All those who are interested will have their name given to one person and they will receive the name of one person. Your task will be to pray deeply for that one person until this virus is contained -- so this will be a long time of prayer for the blessing, health and happiness of one person. The name will be mailed to you along with a few sample prayers. You will NOT know who is praying for you and we ask that you do not tell anyone who you are praying for. If you would like to be a part of this virtual prayer circle, email stjohnstuckahoe@gmail.com

Finally, a suggestion as we all look to spending time in relative isolation. What if we looked at our time apart from church, school, gatherings, crowds and world, as a sort of forced sabbath? We have been asked to distance ourselves from the business and largeness of our common life. We can choose to use this time as a long sabbath of spending time in thoughtful awareness of how connected we are as people. We can spend time praying deeply for one another, our neighbors, our schools, our politicians, by name and by need. We can consider who needs a phone check in, who might not be able to get to the grocery store in case of virus quarantine. Leaving a bag of groceries for a single person who is unable to leave their apartment due to quarantine is a lifesaving blessing.

Please watch your email for more news each week and please be careful with yourself. If you would like to receive regular updates or a copy of the worship booklet we'll be using online, email: stjohnstuckahoe@gmail.com

In hope and certainty,
The Rev. Lisa Graves

