

3 Lent
March 15, 2020
First Sunday of Coronavirus Crisis

In the name of the God of all Creations
The God alive in each of us as God was alive in Jesus,
And the power of God known in the Spirit.
Amen.

This morning we are taking some extra ordinary steps to combat an extraordinary disease: the CORVID-19 coronavirus. Although we have just a few people in our pews this morning, we are practicing “social distancing,” and we are recording this service so that members of the St. Cyprian’s Episcopal Church community, and others, may participate with us in our worship and prayers from the safety of their homes.

As of this morning there are over 2,700 reported cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus in the United States, and almost 60 deaths. Most of those deaths are persons over 60 years of age with underlying health conditions. Many of the parishioners at St. Cyprian’s fit into that category. So, in an abundance of caution, and consistent with guidelines from our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, and the Bishop of the Diocese of Florida, John Howard, we are exercising some changes to our worship service to accommodate the circumstances.

This morning we are offering an abbreviated worship of Holy Eucharist. We will share the Peace following the Prayers of the People and Confession, but we ask that those in the pews acknowledge one another without any physical contact. I will consecrate the Bread and Wine, but distribution to the few parishioners here will be of the Bread alone, and we ask that those desiring to receive the Bread come to the Altar Rail one at a time. I also want to note that I have washed my hands thoroughly before the service ... singing the Doxology twice while washing my hands ... and I will use hand sanitizer prior to handling the elements.

Sundays in Lent are always “Feast Days,” meaning you may break any Lenten Fast you have undertaken. However, for the next two Sundays in Lent we will “Fast” from corporate worship at St. Cyprian’s. There will be NO PUBLIC WORSHIP on the Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent, March 22 and March 29. We will have an abbreviated worship of Holy Eucharist that will be recorded with links posted in a special edition of the Voice, on Facebook, and a full sermon will be posted on our web site.

Indeed, these are extra ordinary times. But God is with us, as God has always been with us, and God will always be with us. I encourage you to be safe in your everyday routines and travels. Some of us cannot avoid doctor appointments, or trips for food and house supplies, but keep your “social distance” as best you can. Please be in touch with one another by phone, email, or social media. St. Cyprian’s is a special community of very special people, gathered together by a faith in a loving God who knows all of us as blessed. Live in that blessing even as the world around us is in turmoil, and we will be a blessing for others.

Let me end these comments with a prayer:

Almighty God, giver of all life, source of all healing; with your unconditional love, look upon the world you have made, and be with us in this time of distress and confusion. Guard those who have been exposed to this disease among us, guide those who care for the ill and suffering, give courage to those who are fearful, and comfort all those who mourn the loss of loved ones. Give us such a sense of your loving presence that we may reach out our hearts to all persons effected by this crisis. Bless the people of St. Cyprian's in our ministries to each other, our neighborhood, and the world around us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.