

DO NOT BE AFRAID

("Do not be afraid....Jesus has risen, as he said" Matthew 28:5-6)

In the midst of this pandemic, our lives have been disrupted in all kinds of ways. Public schools are closed indefinitely; universities have cancelled in-person classes; many have lost their jobs or had their hours cut back at work or are working from home; government and public health officials have told us to stay at home. **“Physical distancing” to prevent the rapid spread of the virus is what we must do now, to protect not only ourselves but to protect the most vulnerable among us.**

As a result, our church leaders have cancelled in-person worship, events, and meetings at First English until further notice. The situation will be re-evaluated at that time. This is done both in compliance with state law and as an act of solidarity and love for our neighbors. We all need to do everything we can to try to slow down the spread of the virus and not overwhelm our health care system. We are all in this together.

As Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, Elizabeth Eaton, has said, during this time of disruption, we need to refrain from physical contact and use this opportunity to pause and reflect and breathe. **Take time each day to pray, reflect, and read Scripture. I am asking you at First English to take a few moments every day, at 7:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. to pray.** Pray for those who are grieving, for the sick, for health care workers, for first responders, for service workers, for older persons and those with underlying conditions who are most at risk, for children and parents and young people whose lives are disrupted, and for calm and peace for yourself and all people. So we will be praying together, though not physically present with each other.

I also encourage you to reach out to one another in love, and especially to reach out to those older relatives, friends, and church members who may feel isolated. Send cards, emails, text messages, make phone calls, and use Facebook, Facetime, Skype, and other social media to stay in touch.

We are providing online opportunities for worship, messages, music, and children's education from the church during this time of not gathering. Videos can be found on Facebook Live, accessed through our church website:
firstenglishlutheranchurch.360unite.com

The church needs your continued support during this challenging time. Thank you for your prayers and your financial support. You can mail your offerings to the church or use the new online giving option through the website. Additional gifts to the church and

to other charitable organizations are especially important at this time.

Many people are fearful and anxious as we face the uncertainty and the threats posed by this new virus. But the Lord tells us not to be afraid, and to remember that He is with us. Jesus Christ shared our human life with us. He is beside us at the most difficult times in our lives. He suffers with us and with all who suffer. He died for us and for the whole world, to forgive us and re-unite us with God. He does it all out of love for us. And Jesus was raised from the dead to give us new life and hope and the assurance of eternal life with God.

God is with us! God is with you!

In the peace of the risen Lord,

Pastor Steve