



## GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Rev. James G. Krauser, Pastor Mrs. Karin Trabold, Pre-School Director

March 20, 2020

Friday in the Third Week of Lent

*<sup>4</sup>I pour out my soul when I think on these things; how I went with the multitude and led them into the house of God, with the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among those who keep holy-day.*

*<sup>5</sup>Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul? And why are you so disquieted within me?*

*Put your trust in God; for I will yet give thanks to him, who is the help of my countenance, and my God. [From Psalm 42]*

The text above is from Psalm 42 which is been part of the Evening Prayer service we have been holding on Thursday evenings this Lent. It takes on a new and deeper meaning for me as I prayed last night and as I compose this email today, especially these words of verse 4: "I pour out my soul when I think on these things; how I went with the multitude and led them into the house of God, with the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among those who keep holy-day."

It has been my calling and delight to lead the people of God in public worship for over 33 years now. On only a couple of occasions, three come to mind, have I had to announce the cancellation of the Sunday services, always related to emergency travel advisories restricting all non-essential travel. In those circumstances they were each isolated incidents affecting only one Sunday. We took those measures out of regard for the safety of our members and the public.

Today a new mandate was issued by Governor Cuomo concerning all non-essential business, essentially requiring workers in all those businesses to remain at home. I have no interest in quibbling about whether the worship of God is an essential activity--it certainly is, and worshipers are not workers in the general sense of the term, yet I also understand that this is an action that is for the public good and it deserves our compliance for the sake of our neighbors. Therefore, it is time for us to suspend our public worship services until further notice. Our preschool remains closed as well.

We had continued our schedule because of the relatively small number of worshiper who gather each week. As I have noted previously both Presiding Bishop Eater and Bishop Egensteiner had counseled the suspension of congregational activities. I once again had asked the guidance of the members of the congregation council this week, and the response was mixed. Several thought we should close, others continue a more limited schedule, no Sunday School or coffee social for example. This was before today's announcement from the governor.

I will continue to post a video including the gospel and sermon for each week on the church Facebook page (and my personal page). I may even include a few more elements. I want to post these videos on Youtube as well to give greater access to them, but am not able to at the moment. I continue to work on this.

The office will also be closed for the time being. I will work mostly from home. Do not hesitate to call me there for you needs 516-804-8837 (the office number rings there too). I will not speculate about the Holy Week or Easter schedule, though I'm not optimistic. We will, of course, keep you informed.

It is likely that the widespread closings and restrictions on workplaces are having an impact on your households, but we hope that you will continue your financial support for Grace in these days as most of our operating expenses will continue. We ask that, if able, you mail in your regular offerings for March by the end of the month.

I close with a second psalm text that was part of our service last night. "You have shown me great troubles and adversities, but you will restore my life and bring me up again from the deep places of the earth." Let these words be part of your daily prayer until we are past this difficult time.

May that restoration come speedily to us, our nation, and the world.

The Rev. James G. Krauser, Pastor



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Grace Church is a congregation of the Metropolitan New York Synod