



March 21, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

Thursday, March 19, was the feast of St. Joseph. I've always liked Joseph and try to make a point to pause on his feast day to remember his godly life. We don't hear much about him in the scriptures, but it's clear that he played an important role in the life of young Jesus. In some Christian traditions, Joseph is even called the "Protector of the Church" because of his care and protection of the Christ Child and the Virgin Mary. In the same way, he is said to watch over the Church, especially during hard times.

St. Joseph has been on my mind as we live in this time of global pandemic. Of course, it's not only the Church that is struggling to respond to COVID-19. This virus knows no creed, no race, no sex, no nationality. But this is a struggle for the Church. We are approaching our second Sunday of "fasting" from in-person worship at St. Elizabeth's and all throughout the Diocese of Newark. It was strange not being with you last Sunday; I think not being together this Sunday will be very hard as this new normal starts to set in.

When our bishop, the Rt. Rev. Carlye Hughes, suspended both public worship services and parish gatherings a week ago, the hope was that our life together would normalize again in early April. It's now looking as if that won't be so. As our bishop writes in her most recent letter to the diocese, "While we do not know when this crisis will end, it seems certain that it will not end before Holy Week and Easter." You can read Bishop Hughes' full letter [here](#).

I am, of course, grieved by this most recent letter, but not because I disagree with our bishop's decision--I fully support her and think it is the right one. I'm grieved because I truly hoped we would be back together by Holy Week. Selfishly, I'm also sad that my first Easter at St. Elizabeth's won't be how I imagined it when I accepted the call to be your rector. But, just as I am sure this crisis will one day end, **I am sure that the Good News of Easter will still be proclaimed even if we are not together in person.** That is the great mystery of our faith--that Christ is Risen--and we will proclaim it in a new and unexpected way this year.

Your staff and vestry have been busy this past week brainstorming ways for us to continue to connect virtually during this time of self-isolation and social distancing. Cathy and I were able to record a service of Morning Prayer and send it out via email for you to watch on the Third Sunday in Lent. This week you will find below a recording of a Holy Eucharist service for the Fourth Sunday in Lent as well as a recording of a children's chapel service for the youngest members of our parish. I hope these recordings will help you draw close to God.

We will continue to offer recordings and (hopefully soon) live-stream some services, prayer times, and even formation opportunities from St. Elizabeth's. We will do our best to post them in a variety of locations. If you haven't 'Liked' St. Elizabeth's on Facebook, I invite you to do that by clicking this [link](#). You can also search for us on Facebook; simply type "St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church of Ridgewood" in the Facebook search tab. While it is not necessary to have a personal Facebook page to view our posts, it may make the process easier for you. If you have a personal Facebook page, share the St. Elizabeth's



videos with your friends--we can call this *e-evangelism!*

Finally, I ask that, if you are able, you continue to give to St. Elizabeth's. I know that many are facing uncertain times not only physically but also financially. Your generous gifts allow us to continue to do our good work, which is needed now more than ever. Your monetary support helps us not only to continue to pay our staff during this challenging time, but also to support our members and members of our community should they find themselves in need. It's no understatement for me to say that your gift may literally allow us to change someone's life in the days ahead.

As we are not together in person on Sundays, it's not possible to place your gift in the offering plate. You can choose to give either by mailing your pledge to St Elizabeth's or by donating online via credit card or electronic check. You can access our secure online giving portal [here](#) and make a one-time gift or set up an account to make a recurring gift. Should you need any assistance, please contact Grace Arscott at garscott@stesridgewood.org, and she will be glad to help.

As I've been saying, if you are in need, please reach out to us directly at the parish office. We may not be in the building with the same regularity, but we are responding to emails and phone calls. If you need me, you can reach me at aolivo@stesridgewood.org or 423-242-5313.

Take care of yourself. Check in on your friends and neighbors and fellow parishioners. Say your prayers. **Do small acts with great love.**

You're in my prayers.

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*O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son, the spouse of his Virgin Mother, and the protector of the Church: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.***

O God, the source of all health: So fill our hearts with faith in your love, that with calm expectancy we may make room for your power to possess us, and