



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 24, 2020

Dear Saints of God,

These days are long, filled with anxiety and challenges we never imagined we would face. We ask questions that do not have immediate answers, wonder when the answers will come and live from moment to moment trying to comprehend the rapidly evolving world around and within us. It is sometimes too much to take in, or so it seems.

In the midst of it all we grieve. We grieve about what was and our inability to respond in some instances as we normally would. I grieve the lack of connection, beyond the 'virtual' connection within we now live and work. I grieve the loss of opportunity to see others face to face and to respond to requests as I used to respond. I grieve the opportunity to worship with our congregations. I grieve that things have changed so much in such a short period of time that it seems almost impossible to handle. And, I grieve for you as you grieve the loss of connections with the people you are called to serve on a day to day basis. It is difficult to process.

So, where do we go from here? I draw your attention to a number of items below.

1. The Synod Assembly, scheduled for June 7-9 at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, has been postponed and is tentatively rescheduled for August 30-September 1, 2020. I am waiting to hear the final word from Michelle Josephson, our Director of Operations, who is in conversation with the RRCC and the Hyatt. As soon as I receive that I will confirm the dates. Tom Madden and Jeff Human are working with Michelle to make certain we cover our legal bases regarding contracts and our constitutional bases regarding the assembly itself.
2. Conference assemblies have been postponed. We will work with the Deans to reschedule those as we are able so that the business of the conference and synod can take place.
3. From all that I have seen and heard from our Governor, Dr. Fauci and the CDC it seems, at this moment in time, that we will continue to be in this "stay at home" phase through perhaps May 15. I learned that Great Britain has suggested to its older population that they should plan on remaining in their homes for the next three months. India has ordered a complete lockdown of 1.3 billion people for the next three weeks. Things change from day to day as you well know. We will continue to monitor these changes and share an update in mid-April when we

- have a clearer sense of reality. This, I hope, offers a suggestion regarding the possibility as to how long we will be worshipping virtually instead of in person.
4. A few have asked the question as to when we might celebrate Easter Sunday. I have no answer for that and understand that each congregation will make that decision based on their local context and needs. The season of Easter is seven weeks long, I hope that perhaps it might be during that time frame that this occurs but obviously can't make any promises. May 24 is the Seventh Sunday and 31 May brings us to Pentecost.
 5. Deans and Assistants to the Bishop are meeting via Zoom on Wednesday mornings each week to touch base, share best practices and find some support. They stand on the front line in the conferences and continue to be a blessing to all.
 6. I will continue to hold office hours via zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1 pm for Rostered Ministers and 3 pm for our entire synod. You can find the rest of the office hours schedule, with any changes, on our home page - <https://upstatenysynod.org/>

Among us and with us is the One who grieved the death of the Son and who has been there before us stands with us, uplifting us when we stumble, encouraging us when we move toward despair and reminding us again and again that we are claimed, named and marked with the cross of Christ forever. In these days I pray that you will know the peace that comes with that claim and remember not only who you are but whose you are. Also, know that I pray for you and your people daily as we found our way forward.

If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call me. Your Synod Staff is working diligently to offer support and direction and it is a blessing for all of us to be able to serve with you. We are Church Together and better for it. May the One who claims us fill you with grace upon grace in the days and, most importantly, bring you peace.

In Christ's Peace,



John S. Macholz, Bishop

