



The Rev. David G. Read  
Rector

March 30, 2020

Dear St. Helena's Parish Family & Friends,

*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone Lord, make me dwell in safety. (PS. 4:8)*

For almost two weeks now we have all been living with significant adjustments to our lifestyles, habits, and routines as we seek to slow the spread of coronavirus and protect the most vulnerable members of our church and community. In my last correspondence with the parish family I reported that, following the directions of our Bishop, St. Helena's would refrain from in-person worship, fellowship, school, and meetings through the end of March.

On March 27, Bishop Reed extended the suspension of all in-person worship and meetings in the Diocese of West Texas through April 30. Similar recommendations have come from the Mayor of Boerne, Governor of Texas, and our President. Therefore, St. Helena's will comply with Bishop Reed's direction and continue our moratorium on in-person worship, meetings, school, fellowship, gatherings, and group studies. We refrain from these practices not because of the legal necessity to do so. We refrain from them because of the very love we have for the members of our faith family, and for our neighbors throughout this community.

I am deeply aware of the sense of loss we feel because we cannot be present in person. Church is all about relationships. St. Helena's parish loves to gather together. One of our highest values is the web of interlocking and overlapping relationships that form the extended St. Helena's Parish Family. I miss seeing you in person! As a priest, I am also deeply aware that this moratorium on in-person worship extends through the sacred days of Holy Week and Easter. For many of us, our walk with Christ is deepened and enriched by the tradition of liturgically walking with Jesus from his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, through the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, to the foot of the cross on Good Friday, and finally to the empty tomb on Easter morning. Our journey is also fueled by regular reception of Holy Communion.

St. Helena's will not postpone Holy Week and Easter. Jesus is our Risen Lord in times of bountiful harvests and in periods of pestilence, persecution, or poverty. While we will not be able to keep the practices of Holy Week and Easter as an in-person community this year, there is nothing that prevents us from keeping them as individuals, families, and households. The Ash Wednesday liturgy in our Prayer Book instructs the priest to stand in front of the congregation and invite them to keep a holy Lent. I reiterate my call to you and invite you to be intentional about keeping a holy, Holy Week this year. Obviously, these are unusual times and all of our plans have changed. Therefore, it is even more important that we be intentional about how we will walk with Christ during this holy season.

The St. Helena's staff is preparing a separate e-mail of Holy Week and Easter resources that you will receive later this week. It will include the Holy Week/Easter worship schedule, scripture readings for each day, and resources for you and your family to use. Please let us know if there are other ways we can assist you.

I encourage you to join your church family on-line for our broadcast worship services. The easiest way to access them is through our website at [www.sthelenas.net](http://www.sthelenas.net). If you miss a broadcast service you may watch a video of it on the website as well. Recordings of our services are posted shortly after they are broadcast.

When it is safe to gather in-person again we will do so with a keen sense of the liberating joy of resurrection. I eagerly anticipate the week when we can once again Pass the Peace, partake of the Holy Eucharist, gather young people in the Youth House, ring the bell for S.H.E.E.P. chapel, learn new music, study the Bible together, host the Decades Dinner, and much, much, more. Until that day I encourage you to make phone calls, write notes, send texts, and connect with other people in your parish family. Each one of us needs encouraging words and regular reminders that we are not making this journey alone.

Our parish office is closed per the instructions of our Bishop. However, St. Helena's is not closed. Our staff is hard at work. Phone calls to the office are being automatically forwarded to staff extensions, so feel free to call or e-mail. Worship, pastoral care, communication, support for children, youth ministry, senior fellowship, education, maintenance, and outreach are all happening in new and creative ways. I am incredibly proud of the work being done by our parish staff, school staff, and lay leaders.

As you know, St. Helena's is dependent on the generous financial offerings of the faithful members of our congregation to do the work God has given us to do. Since we are not able to pass an offering plate on Sunday mornings, I invite you to continue your faithful giving by mailing in a check, donating through our website, or dropping your offering through the side door mail slot on the west side of our offices.

You remain in my daily prayers. Go in Peace. Be Courageous. Hold fast to what is good. Do not return evil for evil but honor all God's Children. Run with perseverance the race which is set before you. Blessings to you!

Peace,

*David+*

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