

*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist,  
discharge all the duties of your ministry.  
(2 Timothy 4:5)*

Dear Beloved in Christ;

If you are following the news at all, you know that the situation with COVID-19 is changing each day. In order to best serve the community of St. Matthew's, your clergy and vestry are doing their best to stay in touch with the latest news and to adjust how we operate as a church in line with that news and with what is happening in the greater community of Gwinnett County and Georgia. With this in mind, your vestry and clergy met this morning and decided to close the St. Matthew's physical plant until March 30, in line with school closures. No meetings should be held on campus without permission from the rector or senior warden.

The preschool has also decided to close, in line with the Gwinnett County school system.

While the building will be closed, certain activities will continue, but in a modified format. Per the scripture verse from the Second Letter to Timothy, the vestry and clergy are mindful that we have options for continuing certain ministries, and we want to share with you our plans not only to offer regular worship, but to keep our community connected to one another.

### **1. Worship**

- a. Tomorrow, we will have worship at 10:30am, but it will be delivered using digital technology. As I write this, members of our communications team are working with Father Tommy to set up a digital connection – something like Zoom or Facebook Live. Please stay tuned to your emails as we update you how we will do this.
- b. Using the same digital technology, we invite you to dig out your Book of Common Prayer and join us for daily prayer. The Office of Morning Prayer will take place at 8AM; Evening Prayer will take place at 6PM. Please join us online as you are able. If you do not have a prayer book at home, you can download a pdf copy here: [https://episcopalchurch.org/files/book\\_of\\_common\\_prayer.pdf](https://episcopalchurch.org/files/book_of_common_prayer.pdf)

### **2. Staying Connected**

- a. Pastoral Support - PLEASE let us know of pastoral needs you may have so that we can provide spiritual support! You can contact the church office at 770-979-4210, or Mother Liz at 770-820-9448, or Father Tommy at 407-342-3377.
- b. Administrative Operations - Our Administrator, Charmaine Warmington, will be working remotely and will be available by phone. She can also put you in touch with either Mother Liz, Father Tommy or any member of the vestry. Our Registrar Susan Carson will also be working remotely to keep the website and Facebook page updated, as well as managing communications via email and Realm.

- c. Communications from St. Matthew's – as mentioned earlier, we expect that there will be continuing changes to our operations as health administrators and government work to manage this pandemic. We will continue to send out notifications via email, with copies posted to the website and our Facebook page. Please check these regularly to stay informed.
  - d. The Vestry Telephone Tree – we realize that there are some members of our community that do not use email on a regular basis. The vestry made the decision to divide our membership up into groups so that contact can be made via telephone. As soon as possible, we will send information out as to who your vestry contact is and how to reach them.
  - e. If you need anything – as much as possible, your clergy and vestry want to be able to offer support and help. If you have a need with which St. Matthew's might be able to help, please contact your vestry representative and we will do our best to provide assistance.
3. **Donations to the church** – *please* continue to support St. Matthew's financially. Although the building is closed, operations are not, and bills will still need to be paid.
- a. If you are not already using Realm for on-line donations, you are encouraged to do so. The link that provides instructions on how to set this up is here.  
<https://onrealm.org/stmatthewssnellville/SignIn?ReturnUrl=%2Fstmatthewssnellville%2FHome>
  - b. Checks and cash should be mailed to: St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 1520 Oak Road, Snellville, GA 30078. Members of the vestry will be routinely checking the mailbox and making deposits as necessary. Please *do not mail* the blue pledge envelopes but use plain white envelopes to mail in your donations. Please be sure to write your account number on the check or include a piece of paper with your name and account number if you are mailing cash.

Beloved, when I get stressed by the events around me, I find my best response is stopping whatever it is that I am doing; taking one or more deep breaths; and finding a scripture passage that grounds me. The passage from 2 Timothy, shown above, was from Bishop Wright's Friday message. It is timely that we find in God's word the advice to not give in to fear, but keep our head, manage as best we can, continue to love God and neighbor, and to **PRAY**. It will help you stay grounded in the days ahead. Remember, there is nothing the world can throw at us that God cannot overcome.

In Peace, Liz+