



# Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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May 20, 2020

*Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.*

—Exodus 20:9-10

*The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.*

—Mark 6:30-32

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the careful deliberation of clergy and lay leaders in this challenging situation. I trust you and your leadership as you make faithful decisions to serve your community and keep your people safe, especially the most vulnerable.

By now, disaster fatigue is setting in. We are all learning new routines and skills as we pivot during this crisis. Our normal rhythms of work and rest have been disrupted. It is vitally important to intentionally plan your time off. Daily prayer and weekly sabbath are not a commandment to satisfy a demanding God, but a lifeline, a gift of respite for us. Take walks, read books, play with your children, go away in a boat to a deserted place. So order and discipline your lives to work eight hour days, and to find one 24-hour period each week when you light the Sabbath candles and rest from your labor. What day will that be for you this week? How will you communicate this to your people? Your mental and spiritual health depend on it. Your people need you rested, joyful and creative.

Congregations are busy planning what must be done to hold in-person worship, and watching the cases and fatalities in their area to prayerfully determine the “hows” and the “whens”. There are many resources on the [gulfcoastsynod.org](http://gulfcoastsynod.org) website to aid you in discernment. As you think about restarting in-person worship, here are some things congregations have found helpful:

- The ELCA *Considerations for Returning to In-person Worship*, available in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#).
- *Twenty Questions for Congregations Considering In-Person Worship* helpful. They can be found in [last week's letter: Louisiana | Texas](#)
- [May 6 Updated Recommendations for returning to in-person worship.](#)

#### Other information:

- *Guidelines for Coming Back Together as a Congregation* in [English](#) or in [Spanish](#)
- *Coming back together for Worship* in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- Synod Assembly registration refunds are taking longer for Cvent to process than we had originally been led to believe. We continue to work with Cvent to ask for the latest updates and will pass those along to you as they are available. Due to the unprecedented number of cancelled events, the current backlog is greater than they originally anticipated when establishing the refund timeline.

- Presiding Bishop Eaton is providing a sermon that congregations can use for Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday in June. The link will be available May 31, 2020.
- [Lutherhill Camp Update](#)
- [Churches Obsessed with Reopening](#) article by Peter Marty in the Christian Century
- [Sequin and Texas during the 1918 epidemic](#)
- **Warnings:**
  - [Houston Catholic Church opens then cancels all masses indefinitely](#)
  - [Georgia church closes two weeks after reopening](#)
  - [39 Dead in New York Latino Lutheran congregations](#)
  - [Calgary Church: I Would Do Anything for a Do over](#)

Our prayers are with you daily.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Michael Rinehart

**Michael Rinehart, bishop**  
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