



# Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

May 27, 2020

Dear Gulf Coast Synod Leaders,

*I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*

—Philippians 1:3-6

We have known for some time that churches are essential. We also know that we don't have to be in the building to be the church. Billy Sunday once said something to this effect: "Sitting in church doesn't make you a Christian any more than sitting in a garage makes you a car."

We have not stopped being the church during this pandemic. If anything, we have been refocusing what it means to be the church and to love our neighbors. Thank you for your ongoing ministry.

The number of cases and fatalities continues to fall in Louisiana, after a spike last week. New cases and fatalities in Texas are less than they were 14 days ago. We are still encouraging you to follow local data.

There isn't much new to report this week. A few congregations have restarted in-person worship, albeit with small numbers. Many are starting with outdoor worship, which turns out to be relatively safe. I would like to reiterate some of the recommendations we have laid out previously:

- The ELCA *Considerations for Returning to In-person Worship*, available in **English** and in **Spanish**.
- *Twenty Questions for Congregations Considering In-Person Worship*. They can be found in **this previous letter**. **Louisiana** | **Texas**
- **May 6 Updated Recommendations for returning to in-person worship**.
- *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 significantly 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. Please know that we are as frustrated and disappointed in the length of time this process has taken as you are.

I hope you will use Presiding Bishop Eaton's sermon for Trinity Sunday June 7, 2020. The video will be available to view and download on May 31 at **YouTube.com/ELCA** and **Vimeo.com/ELCA**. Bishop Eaton will read the gospel appointed for this day prior to the sermon. Local decisions can be made to use the reading on the video or invite another person to read the gospel instead. This is a remarkable opportunity for our Presiding Bishop to do something that has never been done: to preach in most of our congregations on one Sunday. If you can't use the sermon this Sunday, consider using it another Sunday in June.

**ELCA Worship** has provided a Service of the Word (**PDF/WORD**) with appointed readings, corporate prayers of intercession, and hymn and song suggestions. Congregations may adapt and use this resource to produce online worship offerings to surround Bishop Eaton's sermon.

ELCA Worship will continue to provide "Worship in the Home" via the ELCA Worship blog (**blogs.ELCA.org/worship**) for those who make use of these resources for individual/family home devotions each week. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, "Worship in the Home" will include a link to watch Bishop Eaton's sermon as part of these home devotions.

The synod staff and I are available to collaborate with you as needed. Please don't hesitate to call us.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Michael Rinehart

**Michael Rinehart, bishop**

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