



Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 24, 2020

Dear Gulf Coast Leaders,

As always, thank you for your leadership and care in these anxious times.

This past week we have seen increases in new cases in Louisiana and significant spikes in Texas. Harris and Galveston counties have seen record numbers of cases. Texas Children's Hospital has created space for adults so that Houston hospitals do not get overwhelmed. ICU beds in Montgomery County are filling up. Clearly "opening up Texas" has resulted in a jump in cases.

I want to remind you that having in-person worship is only recommended if your area has seen two weeks of declining cases. Even if you are comfortable with a certain amount of risk, you do not want to put your people in danger, especially the most vulnerable. Love does no harm to a neighbor. Those who do open up should observe good physical distancing, wear masks, operate at 25% or 50% capacity depending on your area, and avoid congregational singing. Our recommendations can be found on the synod [website](#). If you need guidance about how to proceed, we are happy to help.

Next Tuesday, we are hosting a conversation on race with my friend and colleague of 30 years, Minneapolis Pastor Kelly Chatman, via Zoom. You are encouraged to join us. Information and registration can be found [HERE](#).

Leadership in times of crisis is deceptively taxing, especially if people disagree on how to proceed. I encourage you to set aside ample time for daily prayer, weekly sabbath, and even some time away for vacation or continuing education. Lean on your colleagues and synod staff for support so you can get away.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Michael Rinehart

Michael Rinehart, bishop
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