



Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

July 1, 2020

Dear Gulf Coast Leaders,

I have resonated with some of our Sunday readings the last few weeks from the Revised Common Lectionary, that have dealt with the Babylonian exile. So much of this pandemic has felt like exile. We are in liminal space, the threshold, the border, not in the former room, but not yet in the next room. In a couple of weeks we will have the option to read about Jacob's ladder, a dream Jacob had while on the border of Israel and Canaan, about a ladder on the border between heaven and earth. Liminal space/the border/the ladder/exile is a place of great danger, and also a place of great possibility. There is no way to avoid these liminal spaces, we simply have to live into them. "Plant a garden," Jeremiah says.

I am grateful that many of you who had planned to restart in-person worship have postponed those plans. It is clear you were watching the numbers carefully and making good decisions. Thank you.

Out of 50 states, all but 11 are showing increases in cases. The most dramatic spikes are in the Southern states. Texas is now in the national news. It is almost certain that Texas will surpass New York, this week posting a record number of cases.



Texas Governor Abbott was very clear in his statement:

Every Texan has a responsibility to themselves and their loved ones to wear a mask, wash their hands, stay six feet apart from others in public, and stay home if they can.
(Houston Chronicle 6/26/2020)

Louisiana is having a spike, too. Mask orders are now in effect in Jefferson Parish (Kenner, Metairie and the West Bank). East Baton Rouge Parish is also becoming a hotspot again, so Mayor Broome has announced a mandate to wear masks. In his press conference today, Louisiana Governor Edwards did not announce any additional state restrictions today. Louisiana is still in Phase 2. The governor asks everyone to wear masks if you must go out. There were 2,083 new cases today, out of 23,000+ tests. (a 9.7% positivity rate - anything over 6% is too high.) There are 799 patients in hospitals. The largest growth is in 18-25 year olds. He is concerned.

Today, synod staff met and decided that, given the spike in cases and hospitalizations, it is unwise for us to be visiting congregations, not only because of local conditions, but because of the number of cases in the counties where we live. We continue to be available to provide sermons by video whenever you need them.

[The most recent interview with Dr. Michael Osterholm](#), Director for the Center of Infectious

Disease Research and Policy and Professor at the University of Minnesota, suggests we will still be dealing with this virus next year at this time. As Jeremiah said to his people in Babylon, we're going to be here for a while. Live into it. We know we can't stop living. We need groceries. We need school. We need worship; on the other hand, we can't overwhelm our hospitals. So, we will be doing a careful dance for a while.

As a reminder, our recommendations can be found [HERE](#).

Since we were not able to have Chrism Mass, on Tuesday, July 14 at 10:30 am we will host an online Prayer Service with Renewal of Vows. Given the spike in coronavirus cases, we have decided to forego the distribution of oil. You can find information on how to connect to the worship [HERE](#).

Our prayers are with you as you care for your congregation and your community. Let us know how we can best accompany you in this liminal space.



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