



Pastoral Care in the time of Coronavirus

Many churches have made the difficult decision to abstain from in-person public worship. While the idea of “closing” church may seem strange and discouraging, we must remember that **WE are the Church** – not the buildings in which we worship.

So even when our normal routines are disrupted, we can still be a source of comfort and care for each other, and we are still called to be a light in the darkness. Here are some ways we can ALL practice pastoral care:

- **Stay connected** – In this rapidly changing world where we’re learning social distancing, we can still hold one another closely in prayer and in love. Being present might be a call where we deeply listen to someone else’s anxiety... not trying to fix it or pivot to discussing our own anxieties. It might be a quick text to encourage someone who is alone or afraid. It might be sharing an uplifting article or praying specifically for or with someone. Be sure to set up buddy systems or regular check-ins on those who live alone.
- **Offer perspective** – There is much we don’t know about this virus but it is likely to go on for quite some time, We can help others lean more fully into God’s presence, trusting that the God who breathed this world into existence is still here with us now, and will be forever. Make space to talk about death or other difficult conversations. Don’t allow your life to be taken over by fear. Speak hope and peace over those you encounter.
- **Be a non-anxious presence** – This wonderful phrase made popular by Edwin Friedman, a rabbi and family systems therapist, means entering into a situation or conversation in a serene way so as to be fully present and not distracted by your own anxieties, which can then fuel greater anxiety in others. It does NOT mean you are not afraid or concerned... it means you’ve wrestled in prayer and deep thought about the situation and so are able to offer reliable and substantial tranquility to people who may need to borrow your calmness or compassion. No one can do this all the time – but it is such a gift when it is present!
- **Pray Together** – Pray for people who are sick or have died – and for those who love and worry about them. Talk to God about not understanding why this happened. Pray for first responders, doctors, scientists, government leaders and others to make wise decisions. Pray God’s comfort over all who are scared, worried or alone.
- **Read Scripture** – Especially appropriate passages are **Deuteronomy** 31:6-8, **Joshua** 1:7-9, **Psalms** 23, 46:1-7, 56:3-4 & 121, **Isaiah** 41:10-13 & 43:1-11, **Matthew** 11:28-30, **John** 14:27 & 16:33, **Romans** 8:28,35-39, **Philippians** 4:5-9, **2 Timothy** 1:7.

Heavenly Father, giver of life and health: Comfort and relieve your sick servants and give your power of healing to those who minister to their needs, that those for whom our prayers are offered may be strengthened in their weakness and have confidence in your loving care; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 260