

A Message from Pastor Ian

One of my favorite hymns, which we sang at my ordination last year, is ELW 513, Listen God is Calling.

The refrain of the hymn says, “Listen. Listen God is calling, to the Word inviting, offering forgiveness, comfort and joy. Joy.”

I have written and received a lot of emails over the last three months. I have been on the phone more than I have in my entire life. I am glad that we have been able to stick together through the use of masks, technology and social distancing. In all of this, I am grateful for the ways that we move forward together. So let’s continue to move forward and listen, because God is calling.

We continue to ask together where is God calling us? What is God calling us to do? Who is God calling us to be?

People of Peace and Trinity, now is about the time that it would be very easy to get comfortable in doing exactly what we were doing before. Everything that we have learned together over the last three and a half months could be thrown out the window in favor of going back to how things were.

However, God does not call us to be the same. God calls us to something new. As much comfort as we often take in God’s love, we sometimes forget that God’s love can call us to be uncomfortable. Uncomfortable because we have never done it that way before. Uncomfortable because what we once held dear may now look a lot different.

But uncomfortable is not bad. Uncomfortable is where God speaks to us. Leads us to newness. That’s Good News. That’s worth celebrating. That’s hope in a broken world. For in that uncomfortableness we sense a calling. That calling is full of forgiveness, comfort and joy. In that calling we are made whole, even as we continue to live in the chaos.

Peace,
Pastor Ian

A Message from Bishop Kristen Kuempel

A COVID-19 UPDATE

It has been a little while since I've given you all an update on the Synod's response to COVID-19.

The Synod office (housed in with the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane) will remain closed as long as the Diocese is closed. Following a conversation with Bishop Rehberg, we are in agreement that this will be in Phase 4 at the earliest—possibly later than that if the numbers are still going up. Once again, the Phase process is closely connected to economic realities—not necessarily the realities of the case numbers in a given county, so we will be looking to those numbers to make our final decisions. Because NWIM is a tenant of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, we will respect their boundaries around the health and well being of our employees.

The Synod staff continues to take travel cautiously. I live in Benton County, where the number of new cases per week is skyrocketing. Because of this, I will not be traveling anywhere for the foreseeable future. I do not want to be the individual that introduces or re-introduces COVID to an area that has been lightly impacted by the virus. In deciding whether or not travel is an acceptable risk, a synod staff member will be taking into account the numbers of new cases in the area they are traveling FROM as well as the number of new cases in the area they have been asked to travel TO—and given the size of our synod, possibly number of new cases along the travel route. No synod staff member is planning to fly at this time. Given these realities, we ask that you ask for a staff member to be physically present ONLY in cases of emergency, and after exhausting all other options.

Some of our congregations are resuming in-person worship with recommended protocols in place. Please keep in mind that what is an acceptable level of risk in one county may not be possible in others. There won't be a triumphal return to worship in one fell swoop. I continue to encourage leadership to monitor county health numbers. The benchmark you are looking for is DECREASING cases of COVID-19 for a minimum of 2 weeks. I want to stress that until a vaccine is developed, or 60-70% of the population has had COVID-19: we are not talking about gathering safely. Without a vaccine or herd immunity the best we can hope for is the lowest level of acceptable risk. Please encourage people to stop talking about “safe” and instead make the shift to “lowest level of acceptable risk” because until we've met certain benchmarks OR have a vaccine: worship will continue to be a risky behavior. Perhaps a risk we are willing to take, perhaps not.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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"Out of my distress I called on the Lord" (Psalm 118:5).

We are a nation in distress. We are a church in distress. The coronavirus has killed 103,000 of us. The virus of racism has taken hundreds of thousands more throughout our history. Now these two deadly viruses converge. Under this distress the veneer of equality has cracked and we see the pain, anger and frustration of those who have been denied the rights and dignity so many of us expect and often take for granted.

I have heard it said that slavery ended with the Civil War. Why don't people of color "just get over it." Here is the question we need to ask, "How do you get over something that isn't over?" The extrajudicial killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd that we have seen have laid open the wound in our country that has never been fully dealt with and has never healed. The officer's knee suffocating the life out of George Floyd "reminds us that blatant acts of intimidation, hatred, and violence continue" ([Freed in Christ](#) social statement, page 3).

Continued peaceful protests, vigils and demonstrations are not only legitimate but essential to move this country and this church to honest and deep self-examination. Just as the body of Christ is COVID positive, so is the body of Christ infected with racism and white supremacy. We cannot turn away from this truth. To deny it is dishonest and dangerous.

Let us stand with those peacefully protesting and acting responsibly. Looting and destruction of property does not further the cause of justice. Government has a role to uphold civil order while also a role to respect peaceful protest. There are those in law enforcement who are acting wisely, even while others have acted irresponsibly. I ask you to support the many people, including those in our church, who are working to de-escalate tensions between law enforcement, protesters and the community.

Psalm 118 continues: "I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (21-24). Christ, the cornerstone, has already broken down the wall that divides us. The time is now. This is the day.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
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