

Orthodox Congregational Church in Lanesville

1120 Washington Street
Gloucester, MA 01930
Telephone: (978) 283-2345
www.lanesvillechurch.org

Pastor of Youth and Family: Peter Aberle (978) 290-0924
Associate Pastor: Daniel Hoffstetter (610) 841-6845



March 16, 2020

Dear Lanesville Family,

After an emergency joint board meeting on Sunday, the leadership has decided to discontinue all church events and gatherings for the rest of the month in response to the recommendations of the CDC and the governor's new decree that groups of 25 can no longer meet for the next three weeks. This obviously includes Sunday Morning Worship (including 3/22, 3/29, and 4/5), but also means that we will not have the sports ministry, youth groups, bible study, Sunday school, or anything else scheduled to meet. Committees and subcommittees have the obvious option to choose to meet virtually through "Zoom" or another medium but are strongly encouraged to not meet in person. If you should decide to meet virtually, we can help you get that set up rather easily.

Although we will not meet on Sunday mornings for worship, Peter and Dan will oversee that a livestreamed, interactive service will occur at our normally scheduled time. This service will have a call to worship, songs, a sermon, and a time of prayer. We plan to have no more than 5 people involved in this service, as to best fulfill the recommendations that have been given. More information will be sent later in the week on the details of how this service will work, but we are looking into the best options for making this time as interactive as possible. Regarding our offering, we encourage you to mail your tithes and offerings to the church in the next few weeks, while the deacons explore potential online giving options. Nothing that we do will be able to replace or fully replicate what the Church is called to do in gathering as the Body of Christ in worship together, but we pray that this will allow us to continue to worship, communicate, and "be" together, albeit apart physically.

We pray that you see that this response is out of a love for our neighbors and our community to help avoid further spread of this disease as well as to avoid putting unnecessary stress on our medical services. In no way is this response out of fear. This was by no means an easy decision, but in many ways, it no longer became our decision to make. In order to be a good witness to our neighbors, to care for those who are most vulnerable, and to comply with the governor this is an unfortunate necessity. And as such, there are three things we would ask of you at this time.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord."

1 Corinthians 12:4-5

First, “do not neglect meeting together” (Hebrews 10:25). This obviously seems strange after what was just written, but what we mean is that we hope you do not use this as an opportunity to disconnect from others completely. Social distancing need not mean isolation. Read Scripture as a family; interact with others online or the phone; attend and chat with others on the stream on Sundays. This will be difficult, but it is temporary and need not lead to unhealthy habits. Second, do not forget about those who are already isolated or who are the most vulnerable. Visitation may not be possible but make it a habit to call or email those who may need interaction. Please also make sure that shopping is offered for those who may no longer be able to do so themselves. And third, pray for and “seek the welfare of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7). We are not alone in this pandemic, and there are MANY who are much worse off than we are. Do not forget those in nursing homes, who are homeless, who are already economically disadvantaged. But also pray for the health care workers and those who are sick.

You are not alone in this. If anyone needs anything at this time, please do not hesitate to reach out to Peter or Dan. We know that things are uncertain and changing so quickly, but we can rest in the fact that Jesus is on the throne. Therefore, let us pray for and seek God’s providential hand in bringing about good from such a difficult time.

In Christ,

Pastors Peter and Dan