

# The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

(The Anglican Church in Limpopo Province)

Bishop: Luke Pretorius

[bishop@stmark.org.za](mailto:bishop@stmark.org.za)

Tel: (015) 297-3297

Diocesan e-mail: [reception@stmark.org.za](mailto:reception@stmark.org.za)

29 Devenish Street, Polokwane



P.O Box 643

Polokwane, 0700

South Africa

24 March 2020

## Special Ad Clerum Coronavirus Lockdown

Dear People of St. Mark's Diocese

I greet you all in these unprecedented times amidst the concern and fear which is COVID-19.

Please receive this special ad clerum concerning the current Coronavirus pandemic.

### 21-Day Lockdown

Our State President, the Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa, has declared a nation-wide lockdown of 21 days starting midnight Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March.

This is an unprecedented move but is entirely the right thing to do. I urge you to follow the instructions given by Government for this period as they are intended to protect you and keep you and others free from contracting this disease.

I have written much about the Coronavirus, and this is available on our Diocesan Website – [www.stmark.org.za](http://www.stmark.org.za) – and from your Rector and Archdeacon. This information is also on our Diocesan Facebook Page. Please do not hesitate to read it and to learn about what is happening. Remember, knowledge is power.

### All Church Activities and Services Cancelled until Midnight 16<sup>th</sup> April

Because of the lockdown all church activities and services are cancelled until after midnight on the 16<sup>th</sup> April.

This includes all Easter services!

Only funerals may be held, but strictly following the instructions of no more than 100 people and with all proper hygiene and social distancing practices obeyed.

Church offices will also be closed during this period.

### Spiritual support during this time

It is our plan that all clergy will be available telephonically and through digital communication for this entire period.

I encourage those without Whatsapp to seriously consider downloading it – it is free, and the only costs will be the data you use. Whatsapp has become the most common and efficient method of communicating effectively and quickly with people anywhere in the world.

Your Clergy will communicate with you primarily through Whatsapp about what they and myself will be doing. Please stay in touch with them. Should your email or cell numbers have changed please let your church office know before Friday.

It is our intention that we record Morning and Evening Prayer and share this with you as a means of inviting you to worship. Although you will be on your own, at least you will know you are joining in with others and giving worship to God. We hope to do this not only on Sundays but every day of the week.

Please be patient with your clergy as they learn about technology and how to send these video clips. It may be that we share worship clips from those clergy who adapt quickly to technology and record themselves.

#### Remember to Pray

Church is not limited to the building; it is you and me worshipping and doing the things of God.

Shutting down services is therefore not the same as shutting down our Christian faith. By stopping our services, the Government is being pragmatic and wise in order to limit the spread of this disease.

We will continue to worship and interact through digital means and through our individual prayer times while at home. This is where we intend to harness Whatsapp, etc.

#### Remember those more vulnerable than you

As you live in isolation for these 21 days, please remember those who are ill, elderly or lonely.

Phone them and speak telephonically. Offer to pray for them and to do practical works like buying groceries or running errands – those that are permitted – for them.

This is an incredible way for us to be church in our community and for each other.

#### Be faithful and strong

I am convinced this pandemic has not caught God by surprise. The love of God and the grace of Jesus and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is available for us. God has not deserted us, but on the contrary will be extra close to us at this time.

I encourage you to use this opportunity to pray and to seek the discerning word of God and to hear what God wants to change and do in your life. Repent of those things God lays on your heart, deepen your relationship with him. Read his word and obey his commands.

We are in Lent and this is what we should be doing anyhow.

#### Finally

I assure you of my prayer for you, and of the support of your clergy.

Trust God and do not stop your prayer time with him.

Continue your financial support of your local church at this time. This is not a greedy appeal for even more money - as some do – but a call and reminder to obedience to the word of God.

With all my love.

Yours in our Lord Jesus Christ,

*+ Bp. Luke Pretorius*

Bishop Luke Pretorius

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