



# Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

---

June 10, 2020

Dear Gulf Coast Synod Leaders:

*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest. ~ Matthew 11:28*

As we've spoken with many of you in recent days, we've heard how weary you are. You are doing ministry in a way for which you weren't necessarily trained. Tracking coronavirus cases in your county has become a task of ministry. We know how hard it is to turn off your brain when you've trained yourself to constantly make decisions and respond to the needs of others. Some of your previously-scheduled vacations and travel have been cancelled or postponed, increasing your burdens. As the case counts trend toward a spike in some areas of our synod, we share your concern and your disappointment. Please hear this: you are doing an excellent job, but you need a break.

Although it rarely seems there's an opportune time to do so, it's important to step back and give yourself the gift of time away. We are writing the bishop's letter this week because Bishop Mike is taking a vacation (through June 14), modeling for us how it's done. We pray he finds refreshment and renewal, just as we pray you'll find the same in coming days or weeks.

### **In-Person Synod Staff Visits**

Bishop Mike, Pastor Tracey, and Pastor Chris are beginning to make themselves available for congregational visits. You're always welcome to invite one of us to submit a sermon video for use in your worship service or to have one of us come preach for your live stream/recording. If your church is gathering for in-person worship, please know that the priorities we use to make the decision to accept your invitation come from a place of concern for your congregation, for our most vulnerable neighbors, as well as for the health and safety of the synod staff:

- We will review current cases in your area (and in the area in which we live) and whether cases have been increasing or decreasing.
- We'll consider our own health and whether we've been potentially exposed to the virus, or are otherwise immuno-compromised.
- We'll ask whether (and how) physical distancing, wearing masks, and sanitation practices have been implemented.
- The synod staff have agreed to practice physical distancing and will arrive no earlier than fifteen minutes before worship and will leave immediately after.
- Individual synod staff members may offer to preside at communion at their discretion, but synod staff will ask that your worship leaders distribute the meal.

Again, our precautions about physical visits are primarily about our care for you and your communities. If we decline an invitation, we thank you for understanding. We'll be back among you as soon as we can!

### **Disaster Response Update**

Tropical Storm Cristobal made landfall this past weekend in Louisiana. Thankfully, except for some minor street flooding and minimal wind damage, it seems the area was spared from a significant impact event. We remind congregations to be preparing now for hurricane season, and to update the synod office with your congregation's disaster liaison.

The synod office continues to invite congregations to send us updates on how your ministry is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through our online form. We will communicate with you as more funding may be made available for seed grants.

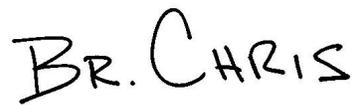
### **Anti-Racism Training Update**

Since the fall of 2019, the synod Anti-Racism Team has been working to develop our synod's anti-racism training strategy. With the recent killing of George Floyd and the nationwide protests, the team is preparing resources to invite our congregations and leaders into crucial conversations around anti-racism and racial justice. Stay tuned for more information. In the meantime, you are invited to join the synod's new Racial Justice Facebook page and to learn more about the ELCA Racial Justice Ministries.

Yours in Christ,



Tracey Breashears Schultz  
Bishop's Associate for Leadership



Chris Markert  
Bishop's Associate for Mission

---

#### **TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod**

12941 I-45 North Freeway #210

Houston, Texas 77060-1243

Phone: [281.873.5665](tel:281.873.5665)

Email: [Synod@GulfCoastSynod.org](mailto:Synod@GulfCoastSynod.org)

