



Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 17, 2020

Beloved in Christ,

Thank you for your continuing leadership in this time of pandemic and protests. Your strong witness and encouragement are critical.

Last week I stepped back and took a much-needed week of vacation. I hope you are also pacing yourself and planning for some time away. Look to colleagues and synod staff for support. An advantage of online meetings is that we can continue to be there for one another. 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 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 15-30 minutes before worship and will leave immediately after.
- If you would like synod staff to preside at communion, let's have a conversation beforehand.

Our recommendations for returning to in-person worship have been posted for some time. One size does not fit all. New Orleans, Houston and Brenham are in different stages. The recommendations are based on several factors, including case counts, death counts, hospital census and recommendations from local leaders. Our recommendations can be found on the synod [website](#). If your leaders are at odds about how to proceed, we are happy to help.

May the peace of Christ dwell in you richly.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Michael Rinehart

Michael Rinehart, bishop
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

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