



Southwestern Texas Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 26, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

In light of Governor Abbot's statements regarding the spike in COVID-19 cases and his executive order that reverses the gradual opening of businesses, I **strongly recommend that congregations who are holding or planning to hold in-person gatherings of any kind suspend them until the current rampant spread of the virus ends.**

Gov. Abbot was very clear in his statement:

"Every Texan has a responsibility to themselves and their loved ones to wear a mask, wash their hands, stay six feet apart from others in public, and stay home if they can," Abbott said. (Houston Chronicle 6/26/2020)

Through this crisis, I have been very aware of my duty to maintain a healthy boundary in my role as your bishop and our polity that preserves the autonomy of congregational governance. I feel I must push this boundary today due to the public health implications of the spike in positive tests and the daunting fact that cities like San Antonio are projecting a shortage of hospital beds in coming weeks.

It is my love and care for the people of our synod that urges me to become more bold in my request. I pray for your safety and health in this time when even the experts are unsure what the pandemic may bring.

Please show that you care for each other by sacrificing the return to gathering. We all long to be together again in-person and share in the nurturing rituals of our faith and the joy of our relationships. There has not yet been a more dangerous time to do so since this crisis began. We must consider this deeply.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Sue Briner

