

Hello, I'm Daniel Ripperton, and I serve on the vestry and the stewardship committee at St. John's Episcopal Church here in Ithaca.

This time of social distancing can, I recognize, be difficult on a number of levels, both interpersonally (as we accustom ourselves to new forms of communal life; mediated by technology rather than face to face), and spiritually (as we discern where God is active in the present). In the midst of these challenges though, St. John's continues to be the church, to livestream morning prayer each day, and weekly worship on Sundays, Loaves and Fishes still distributes food and personal hygiene items using a to-go system, and the governance of St. John's – Mother Megan and the vestry – has promised that the wages and benefits of our parish staff will be covered. What this translates to in practical terms is that bills continue to come in.

Turning to Scripture, in chapter 4, verse 7 of his letter to the Philippians, Paul tells the congregation there that "the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." That peace is something we are called to live in and act out of as the Body of Christ, but in order to effectively do God's work in the world, to be for others the source of rest, nourishment and deep peace that I believe God desires us to be, we, the people of St. John's, need to ensure that our core ministries as a church –along with those who provide them -- have the money they need to keep going during this season.

I understand that more than a few of you may be in situations that are monetarily difficult, but I would urge those of you who pledge to keep supporting St. John's, and those who don't pledge to consider whether now might be a good time to begin. Despite the fact that face-to-face meetings are not possible for the present, there are still plenty of ways to assist St. John's ministry today.

Financially, you could mail in a check to the church's office or donate online through the green Give Online button at www.stjohnsithaca.org. Every dollar helps.

Socially, you might consider contacting a friend – or two! -- in the congregation to see how they're faring. Every expression of concern helps.

And spiritually, we ask that you pray for touched by COVID-19, for those ill, those dying, and those who minister to and care for them, for those without income or employment, for the lonely, the despairing and the scared, and for those in positions of power, both in this nation and across the world. Every prayer helps.

Thank you for continued support of support of St. John's, in whatever form it takes, whether financial, social, or spiritual. And finally, let us pray for one another, that we might know the fierce yet tender love of Christ, and walk in the assurance that as God has brought us to this time, so God will bring us through it to the other side.