

COVID-19 Changes Darien Church Services: Some Livestreams, No Catholic Mass Obligation Next 3 Sundays

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To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, changes have been announced at St. Luke's Parish and Noroton Presbyterian Church, which will each only have livestream, online church services, and at Darien's two Catholic churches — and all of Fairfield County — the obligation to attend Mass has been suspended for Catholics for the upcoming three Sundays.

Darienite.com found no announcements about changes in services or meetings on the websites of the Darien churches United Methodist Church, First Church of Christ Scientist or St. Paul's Church in Darien. This article will be updated when more is known.

First Congregational Church — Livestreaming

One livestreamed service will be on the internet and available for later viewing as well, and all meetings are

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being canceled "both church groups and outside gatherings," the Rev. Dale Rosenberger, senior minister of the church, [announced on the church's website](#).

Here's the full text of the announcement:

For the remaining Sundays of March, rather than congregate in our Meetinghouse, we plan to livestream our service of worship as a substitute for our usual manner of assembly. As soon as we determine the right link to watch the livestream, we will email it to you and also update this URL on the church's website.

We will also make available a recorded version of that worship on our church's web page (uccdarien.org).

Expect an abridged service of worship with instrumental and vocal music, prayers, reading, and homily. Our hope is that by Palm Sunday on April 5 we will be able to resume our usual manner of worship. And that we will then eagerly celebrate Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday with renewed vigor. We will reevaluate where we stand three weeks from now and inform you what might be possible then.

Also, we suspend all of our meetings within the church through March 29 — both church groups and outside gatherings — as we encourage our lay leaders to continue transacting the church's business electronically.

We adopt the path of preemptive caution because of the power of COVID-19 to increase exponentially at this stage in the spread of the virus. We are mindful of church members, especially elder members who might attend worship or meetings and be exposed out of their loyalty to First Congregational. But we also consider our wider Darien community and beyond, and our obligation to be good neighbors. Not far down the road in Westchester County one man in a house of worship created a significant pocket of exposure.

We recognize this is significant upheaval for our congregation. But we believe that the power of our Christian community can withstand this test, just as we have for over two centuries. We ask for your patience and support as we try to get ahead of this pandemic, as we try to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. We apologize for this disruption in our spiritual life and hope you understand.

We realize the looming threat of this pandemic has caused anxiety and even trauma to some. Benjamin and I make ourselves available to be present unto you, to walk alongside you, to pray with you, even to bring you communion. Only say the word and we will appear at your doorstep, as best as we can. Our mutual care also extends beyond that—especially now. If you or someone you know is ill and needs help, if you are quarantined and need things brought in: (203) 655-0491 x. 101.

Even though we are now prevented from physically assembling, this is a time for our membership to pull together. Please pray for First Congregational Church, for each other, and for the wisdom of your leaders. It is not a time for stoking panic, but for intelligent urgency about this moment in history and our charge.

Please be leaders in your neighborhoods as social distancing has become the watchword of the moment. Your friends or neighbors may become filled with fear and require another to walk alongside and reassure.

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. Dale Rosenberger,

Senior Minister

St. Luke's Parish — Livestreaming

St. Luke's Parish [has announced](#) that in-person services won't be taking place, and the morning prayer service, with choral matins, will be online at 10 a.m. Both an early and a late church service have been canceled. You can find a link to the livestream for the morning service [here, on Facebook](#).

The parish is also suspending its regular community supper, it said in a notice on the parish home page. In addition, the notice warned: "In this time of constant changes, our regularly scheduled meetings that are listed on this website might not be up to date. Please check with the head of your activity to see if it is still taking place."

Noroton Presbyterian Church — Livestreaming

This church is also ending in-person church worship services for the time being. Its services at 10:30 a.m., Sunday and 7 p.m. Wednesday will each be livestreamed. The livestreaming/no-in-person worship begins this Sunday, March 15.

Here's [the announcement](#) from the NPC website, dated Thursday, March 12:

Dear Noroton Church Family,

In order to stay in step with our community's efforts to exercise caution and to be proactive in response to the potential spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) we are following the strong recommendation of our state and local leaders to cancel/reschedule large group gatherings. As a result, we will be moving our weekly worship services to a LIVE stream format only beginning this Sunday, March 15.

So what does that mean? Put simply, instead of gathering together onsite, we'll be gathering online where the services will be broadcast.

Services will be scheduled for Sundays at 10:30 a.m. and Wednesdays at 7 p.m., and can be accessed by following the LIVE stream link at: www.noroton.church.

How long will we be using this format? We are hopeful that it won't be for very long, but at this point we don't know. Our leadership is regularly monitoring updates from the CDC and local government. We will use that information to determine when it is appropriate to return to our traditional meeting schedule.

What about other events and groups? At this time larger group meetings and events are being canceled/rescheduled, while some of our smaller groups are still on the schedule, but may be canceled/rescheduled or meet virtually.

Please check the website for the most up-to-date information. The building and main office will remain open, and we will continue to offer spiritual care throughout the week.

As we continue to live into God's call to love and serve our neighbors, join us as we pray for the health of those who have been afflicted, peace for those contending with fear, and for wisdom for our leaders and local church partners.

— Pastors Greg, Brandi, Jimmy and Gary

Christ Community Church

Christ Community Church [announced in its newsletter](#): that it will be broadcasting its Sunday services for the next two Sundays at 10:30 a.m., and they will be closed to the public:

In response to Town of Darien recommendations and school closings, we have canceled all Sunday services and any other official CCC gatherings for the next two weeks. We will be broadcasting a service on our [Facebook Page](#) at 10:30 a.m. the next two Sundays. Please join us in prayer for all those who have fallen ill or those who have experienced the loss of a loved one from the virus. We'll keep you posted on future plans!

The church also announced, in the same newsletter:

The Darien pantry will be closed during the church closure times mentioned. Clients with a emergency need will be accepted by appointment ONLY on Wednesday and Saturdays by calling (203) 200-0814 or by [email](#). Additionally, if you know someone that is elderly or homebound and may be in need of help from our Pantry, please let us know so we can discuss options to get them the items they need. Thanks.

Catholic Churches

St. John Roman Catholic Church, in an email to parishioners, passed on this message sent by Bridgeport Diocese Bishop Frank Caggiano to all parishes (boldface in original); in addition to St. John Church, it applies to all Roman Catholic parishes, including St. Thomas More Church in Darien:

In my Memo on March 9, 2020, I asked you to inform your parishioners that anyone exhibiting flu-like or cold symptoms, the elderly and those with underlying physical conditions that would make them more susceptible to the Coronavirus are not obliged to attend Sunday Mass. **Beginning this Third Sunday of Lent (March 14 to 15) through the Fifth Sunday of Lent (March 28 to 29), I am temporarily dispensing all Catholics of the Diocese of Bridgeport from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.**

I am taking this action so that anyone who may be fearful of becoming ill or of spreading illness, especially healthcare workers, caregivers to the elderly or infirmed or parents with young children, may have peace of mind in knowing that, with this provision, they do not commit mortal sin if they choose not to attend Sunday Mass. For those who decide to refrain from attending Mass on the Sundays indicated above, I would ask that they treat the Lord's Day with the honor it deserves and try, to the best of their ability, to view Mass online or to make time to read the Scriptures for the day.

In light of Governor Ned Lamont's Executive Order of yesterday, which prohibits gatherings of 250 people or more throughout the State through the end of April, but makes an exemption for worship services, it may be the case that local authorities contact you to consider temporarily suspending the public celebration of Mass. Until then, there should be no changes to the public Mass schedule of any parish. Should that moment come, however, Pastors will be required to follow any ordinances or mandates published by legitimate local authorities, who have been entrusted to protect the community at large. Furthermore, if any future ban on public assemblies necessitates the suspension of public Mass, Pastors should see that all Mass intentions are fulfilled, and all priests would be expected to celebrate private Mass daily.

I also want to repeat my strong suggestion that non-liturgical, social events scheduled to take place in the immediate weeks ahead at parishes or diocesan institutions, especially those at which the elderly may be inclined to participate, be postponed or canceled.

I ask all Pastors and leaders of institutions to inform the Office of the Bishop if you become aware of any major new mandates, significant decisions or closings in your respective towns of which the Diocese should be aware.