

Dear Christ Lutheran,

Churches are fairly unique social gatherings in our culture. At our little congregation in particular, we have people who:

- Are young and old
- Are working and not working
- Live in multiple counties, cities, and travel good distances to attend worship
- Work in a variety of settings, including healthcare facilities and care homes, large and small businesses, schools, daycares, and with large sections of the general public
- Interact with large groups of others in Bible studies, at senior centers, at gyms, sporting events, and the like
- Serve and volunteer with vulnerable populations
- Are healthy and some whose immune systems are easily compromised

In other words, because the people of Christ Lutheran are really good at being church in the world, the numbers of people we come in contact with or could potentially pass a virus to is quite large. As church together, we recognize that we want to care for and protect vulnerable populations at times like this. While information and instructions seem to be changing rapidly, we also know that to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, we have been asked by government and disease experts to practice social distancing and limit large group gatherings.

Therefore our leadership (the council and staff) at Christ Lutheran has decided to suspend all worship services and official ministry activities for at least the next week. This includes

- **Sunday morning worship & GIFT Time on March 15 & 22**
- **Lenten dinner & worship on March 18**
- **All Bible studies & Lenten small groups this week**
- **The Youth Banquet on March 22**

As far as we know, Filling the Gap is still happening this week so that we can feed children during Spring Break who do not have enough to eat at home. We will keep listening to experts about how to handle things in the future and we will be sending out notices through email, the church Facebook page, and on our website. We do have a couple significant ministries on the weekend of March 27-29 (St. Paul's Breakfast & Family Promise) and we will keep you posted on any changes to those. In the meantime, these are some of the things that we can and will be doing to remain church together:

- **Pray & worship together at home** – At our normal worship times (Sundays at 9:00 & 11:00, Wednesday at 7:00pm), Pastor Chad will be offering a short spoken prayer service on Facebook Live, including scripture, prayer, and a message. Shortly thereafter it will be available on our website for those who do not have Facebook. The church building will be open during these times if you want to come in for coffee, care and conversation.

- **Worship on the Way** – These boxes are available in the lobby and they contain everything you might need for an at-home worship experience, including various prayer ideas, worship booklets, and instructions. Feel free to stop by and pick one up.
- **Check on the church people you know** – Most of us sit in the same pew week after week. Call and check on the people who sit in your pew or the people you might drink coffee with in the Fellowship Hall. Previously you may have only interacted with them on Sunday mornings, but this is a great chance for you to actually give them a call and get to know them a little better and make sure that they are handling all of this ok. Please do spend just a few minutes this week checking on at least one other person in the congregation.
- **Continue to be church in the world** – Check on your neighbors, friends and others you know who may be struggling. See if there is anything you can do to care for them during this time, especially if they are in one of the vulnerable populations.
- **Use this Sabbath break as a way to go deeper with the Lord** – Read an entire book of the Bible (like the Gospel of Mark), try out a new prayer practice or style, set a reminder on your phone to pray regularly, be creative, spend more time with family or close friends, be still.
- **Continue to give generously to the church and to others** - This will be a hard time financially for the church and other ministries. While our congregation is healthy financially, we do depend on regular giving to keep the lights on, pay our staff, and support other outreach ministries. Please consider how you can continue to support our ministry financially, whether by mailing a check, sending an electronic payment, or coming in during office hours to drop off an offering by cash or debit card.

This is an unprecedented situation, at least in my lifetime and ministry. I know that we are all doing the best we can to endure and remain faithful to God's call and presence. When our routines are disrupted, we can use this as an opportunity to draw closer to God and deepen our spiritual lives. My hope and prayer is that all of you remain safe and that we continue to be the church in world, wherever we are and however that may look. If you want to talk or just need to connect with someone, give me a call at 636-699-8747.

In Christ,

Pastor Chad