

Gloria Dei

LUTHERAN CHURCH

March 17, 2020

Decisions about Public Worship

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Saviour,

It was good to gather together to listen to God's word and break holy bread together on Sunday. We remembered those of you who could not be with us. I was hoping that - with the measures we had put in place - we could continue to meet for our weekly gathering in this way.

However, each day brings us new changes and adaptations to our lives as our community, nation and world attempts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Yesterday, our provincial health officer issued a mandatory order banning all gatherings of 50 people or more. In addition, the advice from health and medical professionals to those over 70 years old is to avoid gatherings altogether. The majority of Gloria Dei's membership falls into this "at high risk category". Reflecting on our Christian love and duty to one another which calls us to do what we can to protect the vulnerable from falling prey to the coronavirus illness, the Church Council passed the following resolution:

"That Gloria Dei discontinue the regularly scheduled 10AM Sunday worship services effective March 22 until such time that our provincial health officials lift the ban on gatherings of 50 people or more, put in place on March 16 due to the COVID-19 pandemic."

That this decision is the right one, was further confirmed by a third letter from our National and Synodical Bishops sent to all congregations this morning. The Bishops call on all congregations to: "suspend public worship services and other gatherings effective immediately."

I know that this is difficult to imagine and anxiety inducing. But it doesn't mean that the church is closing. As one pastor recently reminded his congregation: "Many things have been cancelled in this time of coronavirus. Love is not one of them." Friends, let us not lose sight that we still belong to each other and we still belong to God.

How shall we worship together in the coming weeks?

Although we will not be able to gather physically this coming Sunday, I will still prepare a sermon and send it out to you by email together with the Sunday bulletin. We will also try to add video links to the hymns. I am inviting you, as much as possible to set aside time on Sunday morning at 10AM for a Sabbath time of worship. Light a candle, read the lessons and listen and/or sing the hymns. The Lenten vases that the children created can also provide a visual focus. Perhaps some you could take photos of your family gathered around your Sunday home "altar" and send them to Shelley. We could then share them with the rest of the community by email (only to the community) the following week.

The worship committee will continue to meet and explore other possibilities and creative ways we can gather in the Spirit to pray, study and worship in the weeks, and possibly months to come.

How shall we care for one another in the coming weeks?

I will be working closely with the Pastoral Care Committee so that everyone will have a point of contact with at least one other person in the congregation. If you need help with getting groceries or other supplies, please email or call the church. If you can deliver or pick up things, let the church know so that you can be connected with those in need.

Alternate Ways to Give

Please consider as you are able, ways that you can continue to give and support the church during this time. This is a good time to consider giving through Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR). Thank-you to those who are already doing this. Your choice will make a significant difference in the weeks and months to come. Or consider sending post-dated cheques if possible, or dropping them off at the church.

Finally, I offer this prayer for our use at this time:

We pray to you Almighty God, in this time of anxiety and apprehension. You are our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Do not let us fail in the face of these events. Uphold us with your love, and give us the strength we need. Help us in our confusion, and guide our actions. Heal the hurt, console the bereaved and afflicted, protect the innocent and helpless, and deliver any who are still in peril; for the sake of your great mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

From Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Vida +