



FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

INSPIRE. EQUIP. REACH.

March 17, 2020

Dear First Lutheran Church,

For such a time as this we shall wash our hands and our neighbor's feet. The global outbreak of the Coronavirus is impacting our community. It is requiring government officials and community leaders to make decisions quickly. We are seeing unprecedented cancellations and recommendations from health officials to limit gatherings. All are scrambling to stay ahead of the situation.

Above all else, the Bible commands us to love God and our neighbor, and to live, love and lead like Jesus. We all hope the following days in our nation will be days defined by love for one another and reaching out to God. Our commitment to love our neighbor has led the council and staff of First Lutheran to a very difficult decision. We believe the most loving thing we can do is to immediately suspend all public activity at First Lutheran Church. We would rather make decisions today that seem extreme than to look back months from now wishing we would have done more. Therefore,

Effective Immediately: All public activities at First Lutheran are suspended, with the exception of funerals. We will continue to conduct funerals in the safest manner possible to avoid transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

We need to heed the advice of our elected officials and follow their recommendations. Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota and Gov. Doug Burgum of North Dakota have closed schools. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have limited gatherings of more than 50 people. **The Bible clearly commands us to be good citizens.**

We will revisit this decision every Monday and republish our guidance and intent. Our hope is this ends quickly. However, we are aware we may be in this posture for some time. The staff will continue to work, either from home or the office, to manage the ongoing care of the congregation and to provide online resources. The building will remain open during the business hours of 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (closing at noon on Friday).

We are first and foremost a community who worships God. It is the greatest commandment! Our technology and worship teams will deliver services online starting this Wednesday night. Although this is stretching us into new areas, we are confident we will rise to the occasion. Keep watching your email, our website (flcfargo.org) and our Facebook page for information about worship times and announcements.

Over the centuries the Church has often found itself in exile (not being able to gather). During these times, the Church has always found ways to fulfill the intent of God in the world and found ways to make our most challenging times also be our finest hour. So, we will figure this out. We will pray toward heaven and we will row towards shore.

Experts are telling us the virus will make its way throughout the United States and our best defense is to practice social distancing in order to distribute the effects of the contagion over a longer period of time, thus allowing our healthcare system to keep up. Therefore, in the next week, we will develop our efforts to help those most vulnerable. We will begin outreach (likely by phone) to those who are most vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus and most isolated. Part of our command to love our neighbor is to guarantee no one finds themselves isolated and fearful. If you have needs, concerns, or prayer requests, don't hesitate to reach out to us. We may need to mobilize teams to bring food or medicine to the doorsteps of those who are self-isolated or at-risk. If you are able to help in any of these efforts, please let us know.

Prayer during times like these is one of our highest priorities—prayers for clarity, for calm, for caution, and for those affected physically and economically. I like the prayer of Daniel when he was in exile in Babylon.

*“O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God.”
Daniel 9:19 ESV*

Please pray that we have the confidence to trust the Lord for his protection; that we make the most of the Gospel opportunities we face; that we look after those around us; and that we act with care and wisdom to delay the spread as much as possible. If you have any questions please reach out to myself, the staff or to any of the council members.

In Christ and on behalf of the Council and Staff,



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