

Coronavirus and COVID 19
Address to Zion Lutheran Congregation
Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Coronavirus and the resulting COVID-19 are changing every aspect of our lives. Shops are closed, offices quiet and parents of school children are wondering how to keep them occupied at home. Then there are those who have contracted, or worse, succumbed to the Coronavirus. Many are hoarding food, cleaning supplies and other staples. It's a new world, seemingly overnight. Fear and anxiety have gripped the nation!

Please follow the sound advice of medical professionals and public health officials to protect yourself and your loved ones from this virus. President Trump with his staff and the CDC, along with Governor Noem and the Mayor of Sioux Falls have asked that we do NOT meet with a group larger than ten. Well, that puts us above the limit in most things we do here at Zion Lutheran.

So, with that being said, **ALL ACTIVITIES AT ZION LUTHERAN ARE CALLED OFF UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.** This includes: all worship services - Sunday and Wednesday Lent, Sunday School, Bible Studies, Suppers, Choir, Zion Board Meetings, LWML Meetings, all Small Group Ministry Groups.

We will be continuing to evaluate the information about COVID-19 as released. As you know it seems to be changing daily.

The GOOD NEWS is ... We will be recording our Zion Lutheran Sunday worship service for our every Sunday broadcast on KSOO 1000 AM at 10:00 am. We will also be making our Sunday worship service available on YouTube and through our various media outlets ... Facebook Page, Weekly Email List, Website. We will continue to do this weekly as long as we are asked not to gather together.

Also, the staff will be in the office regular hours through week. If you want to come in and have communion ... make an appointment with Maxine and I would be happy to give you private communion. If you want to come in and talk and/or pray ... make an appointment and I will be happy to talk and pray. We are available as your staff as usual only minus some of the visiting we are accustomed to do.

It's important that we honor those who have been put in authority that we would go with their recommendations. The Fourth Commandment tells us to respect government authority as it acts for the physical well-being of our great nation and the world.

It makes me think of Romans 13:3-4, *“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good.”*

The good citizen leaders of this nation are trying to limit harm, and we support them. We view this limitation of church services more as a duty and opportunity to act for the benefit of our fellow citizens, especially those most vulnerable (*“love your neighbor as yourself,”* Mark 12:31).

Let me say how wonderful it is to serve and worship a God who has ultimate authority and power over everything that is seen and unseen. Every trial and tribulation in our lives is an opportunity for us to re-examine our conscience, draw closer to the Lord, and embrace Him from the depth of our hearts.

During this global crisis, it’s important for believers not to become anxious or fearful but pray without ceasing so that the peace of God will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. We must exercise a dimension of faith while battling mountains in this fallen world.

Remember David while battling Goliath, David was more focused on the glory, power, and faithfulness of God than on the physical strength of that giant. Worry is not our companion, and panic is not our style, rather we respond with prayer. As believers, every one of our prayers counts.

It’s time that believers act with discernment and encourage and edify each other and those in our circle of influence. Here are a couple ways to encourage each other in these days of isolation ... Given that many students and families are "shut-in", consider sending some of our elderly members cards; have your children color them a picture or write to them on a card. If you might be interested in this activity, contact us and we will help get you connected with names.

I encourage you to call 5 people each, someone who may be on your heart ... friends, family, fellow church member, an old friend or those who you know to be alone these days. If you know a need and are able take care of it for someone then do that. If you have a need or know of a need and can’t take care of it, please call the church office, we have volunteers who are ready to help as best we can.

In the face of the COVID-19 threat, with all its fears and uncertainties, we can shine as people who have certain hope through our faith. Let our response reflect to other people around us that we live in faith, not fear, and that we are filled with hope.

Our hope is not in science, technology, or medicine. Our hope is in the One who has given us these good gifts and the greater gifts of life and salvation through the forgiveness of our sins. Through your faithful and hope-filled witness during this public health crisis, it's possible that people in your life will repent and receive the healing that only Jesus can provide.

Again, PLEASE follow the sound advice of medical professionals and public health officials to protect yourself and your loved ones from this virus. But do not fear. You are God's own child washed in the waters of Holy Baptism, cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and filled with hope.

There is a realm of deepest intimacy with Christ that God is calling us to be in. In that realm of intimacy, we realize it's Christ who dwells within us ... from Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

In COVID-19, there is a new opportunity for us to bring Good News to our dying world. *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."* (Psalms 46:1)

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Greg