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Pastor Ross W. Ulrich
Pastor Daniel Slaughter
Principal, Bryan Schneck

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Dear family at Zion Lutheran,

The other day President Trump and the Center for Disease Control announced the federal recommendation that for the next 15 days everyone is to limit gatherings to no more than 10 people. We encourage everyone to follow these recommendations made by our leaders as they are working to keep us and the people of our country safe. Following these recommendations the leadership (Church Council President, Pastors, and Principal) of Zion has decided to now suspend all scheduled activities at Zion through April 5 and will limit ourselves to no more than 10 people within our building at any one time through that point. This cancellation, then includes all worship services, classes, meetings of more than ten people, dinners, etc.

Why are we doing this? It's not because we are afraid of this disease or of death. In Christ we have all the confidence in the resurrection that is coming and so we have nothing to be afraid of. Instead, the reason we are doing this is love. Love for our government, as we seek to "honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect" (**4th Commandment**). Love for our neighbor, as we take precautions so that we "do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and be a friend to him in every bodily need" (**5th Commandment**). As a congregation, we are called to love God and our neighbor, so we would want to avoid anything that would inadvertently contribute to sickness and loss of life in our community. We also would not want to continue to indiscriminately gather, and in the process give the community the wrong impression that we do not care about it or its well-being, bringing dishonor to the Gospel by our actions.

While love for God's representatives in our government (**4th Commandment**) and love for your neighbors' physical welfare (**5th Commandment**) compel us to temporarily suspend worshiping together in person, love for God's Word and worship (**3rd Commandment**) still compels us to be in God's Word, even if not in the same way. While in-person worship services are cancelled, the pastors will be replacing these services with online videos of the liturgy, hymns, sermon, and prayers. These videos will be posted both on our website (zionmonroe.org) and on our Facebook page. If this letter is reaching you by physical mail and not by email, this means we do not have an email address on record for you. If you have an email address that you have and use, please contact office@zionmonroe.org to be added to our email list so that we can keep you updated that way. Otherwise, for those members who do not use email, if you would like us to send you printed copies of the services and sermons, please call the church office at 734-242-1378 to let us know, and we will be sure to do so.

We also, as always, encourage you to be in the Word daily on your own and as a family. One great way to do so is to make use of the online daily devotions from our synod, available at <https://wels.net/serving-you/devotions/daily-devotions/> or made use of Meditation books available for pickup at Zion.



www.zionmonroe.org
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Pastoral care during this time too has some restrictions it must operate within, but will continue as much as possible. Pastors, like everyone else, are not currently allowed within hospitals, nursing homes, or prisons, with the exception being if someone is considered to be near death. The pastors still can and are still happy to speak over the phone with any members who would like to speak with them. You may call the church office either to talk or leave a message. Additionally, Pastor Daniel Slaughter can be reached at 734-735-0552 or at dslaughter@zionmonroe.org and Pastor Ross Ulrich can be reached at 734-240-3888 or at rwulrich@zionmonroe.org.

While we can share God's Word over the internet or over the phone, it is not possible to serve the Lord's Supper that way. Private Communion will still be available during this time by appointment for anyone who would like it. Please contact one of the pastors or call the church office to make an appointment.

The pastors will serve as we are able. If either of the pastors comes in contact with someone with the Covid-19 virus, we might need to be quarantined, so we are striving to be faithful and available with wisdom.

To repeat what was said before, these protocols to cancel all scheduled activities and limit the building to 10 occupants are in effect through April 5. As the situation seems to change every day, we have no way of knowing what things will look like after that. We pray that this situation improves quickly and we will be able to meet in person in some form for Holy Week. And we will be watching as things develop and making a decision on that as we get a clearer picture of things.

Finally, having explained how Zion will operate at this time in keeping with the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Commandments, let's also remind ourselves of the 1st Commandment, which tells us to "fear, love and trust in God above all things." This pandemic is serious and we should take it seriously, but we absolutely do not have to be afraid. Jesus is bigger than this pandemic. Jesus is bigger than everything. In him we have all forgiveness, protection, hope, and life. Paul says in Romans 8:31-32, **"What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son but gave him for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?"** And so, even as we try to act wisely and lovingly in this difficult situation, ultimately, as always, we look to him and pray to him and rely on him for everything. With his Word, with his promises, with his care, he will see us through this and through all this life, and none of his people will be lost to him.

In Christ,

Your undershepherds,

Pastor Daniel Slaughter and Pastor Ross Ulrich