



PO Box 29, Nisswa, MN 56468

March 16, 2020

Dear Lutheran Church of the Cross Community:

As events in our world, country and state continue to unfold, a particular bible verse repeats itself in my head:

*“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name and you are mine.”*

--Isaiah 43:1

When I got home from Church on Sunday I listened to Governor Tim Walz deliver his press conference. He declared a “peace-time state of emergency” across Minnesota and urged all organizations – including faith communities – to suspend all gatherings of more than 250 people and to avoid gatherings of even smaller groups that include persons at higher risk of contracting Covid-19. Recently, the CDC has recommended that organizations postpone gathering of 50 or more people.

In response to the Governor’s directive, along with staff and church council consultations, we will suspend in-person worship until *Palm Sunday*. We will also be canceling/postponing all ministry programming such as:

- Wednesday Lenten Suppers and Worship (*worship will be livestreamed*)
- Wednesday morning Bible Study
- Route 56
- All Ministry Team Meeting on Mar. 22<sup>nd</sup>
- Prayer Shawl Group
- Primetimers
- All Choirs (Adult, Kings Kids, and Bells)
- High School Youth Group
- Confirmation
- Toning with a purpose
- Book Discussions
- Rummage Sale
- Stonehouse Fridays
- Mini Youth Gathering Meetings
- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Meeting
- Suicide Loss Survivors Group
- Cancer Support Group
- Sunday morning worship (*worship will be livestreamed*) & Fellowship Hour

If you have any questions please contact the Ministry team leaders and staff about ongoing ministry for the next couple of weeks. We will keep you informed through our weekly emails, through our website, and our Facebook pages.

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When the early Christians gathered for worship, they met in homes. As group sizes outgrew their homes, they constructed church buildings in which to gather. Now, during this time of the Coronavirus we will be going back to a house church model; this will allow us to remain in our homes, yet be able to worship. Starting March 18 at 6:45pm, we will Livestream our Wednesday Lenten Worship services as we “Journey to the Cross.” We will also be streaming our Sunday worship services at 10:30 am. Please join us online for worship services. You can find the bulletin and the streaming link at [www.lccnisswa.org](http://www.lccnisswa.org).

In an effort to better support you as we cancel our regular programming, we will offer online daily devotions via our Facebook page (Lutheran Church of the Cross – Nisswa, MN). On Monday–Friday at 10am, one of our staff will lead us through a brief daily devotion. Our first devotion will begin on Tuesday, March 17. We will also have these devotions available on our website.

Watch for news from each of our Ministry teams as we look at new ways in which to interact with our members. Again, we will keep you posted via email and [www.lccnisswa.org](http://www.lccnisswa.org). The Church will remain open during normal business hours, so don't hesitate to call if you have questions or concerns.

During this time of high anxiety and uncertainty, it good for us all to remember that through it all, God walks along with us. On Monday–Friday's from 1-4 pm, I welcome you to come to church to take a walk with God through our Prayer Labyrinth. A labyrinth is a pattern of pathways that weave in a circle around a central point. You silently and peacefully walk through the pathways to get to the center – it's about the journey at least as much as the destination. Walking a labyrinth can be calming, as you physically slow you down while you wind your way through the path. On Wednesday the Prayer Labyrinth will be available until 7 pm. Also, on Sundays you are welcome to spend some time with God in contemplative prayer, or share personal prayer time with me. Our Sanctuary will be open from 1-5 pm. Come meditate with some scripture or listen to the organ, release your worries to God, and be strengthened with the words “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name and you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1.

Please remember your church in your prayers as we all navigate this together. If you have not signed up for *Simply Giving* please consider to do so now, to ensure that we may continue to provide ministry throughout our community. You can call Karen, our Financial Secretary at 961-2016, to set this up. Offering envelopes may be dropped off or mailed to the church office. We know that for some, the events resulting from the coronavirus will cause a financial hardship, but if you are able to increase your gift during this time, please consider doing so. Our community ministry partners, our synod, and our own faith community will continue to need financial support.

The LCC staff and I will be in touch with you regularly with any updates through email, Facebook, and our website. In the meantime, know that you are in my prayers – prayers of gratitude for your faithfulness, prayers for health and safety for you and your loved ones, and prayers for our larger community. I will continue to pray for the protection of all those responding on the front lines of this illness, and pray for wisdom and courage for our community and civic leaders. I lift these prayers, trusting in our Lord and Savior who reminds us to “not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name and you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1

Blessings,

*Pastor Drew Bakken*