



March 13, 2020

Dear friends of Lutheran Church of the Cross,

What I have come to know and love about our church is that we are a community of Hope, rooted in God's promise through Christ to love and care for us and the entire world. It is because of this hope that I am writing to you, because I know that many of you may have questions and concerns related to the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID 19) and our response. We are carefully monitoring updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota Department of Health.

At the time that I am writing this email, neither local nor state officials have requested that congregations or other organizations in Minnesota limit public gatherings, and so this Sunday we will be holding worship and a celebration for Pastor Kari in-between our two services. To be faithful to our responsibility to limit the spread of this virus, we are taking the following steps related to our worship:

- We will not be using the communion rails for the remainder of Lent as we serve communion
- Communion Assistants will be washing their hands before they serve communion
- Our baptismal font will be moved to the corner and will be without water unless we have a baptism
- Nursery will not be offered but we would love to hear the energy of the kids in worship.
- Instead of the usual receiving line after the service, Pastor Kari and I will be in the Narthex to greet you with smiles rather than handshakes and hugs.
- During the Coffee hour, doughnuts will be served at the counter by the coffee servers who will be wearing food service gloves.

To make our worship service space as safe as possible, we are providing hand sanitizer in multiple locations, cleaning regularly, and encouraging all of us to practice the best hygiene practices (washing hands for at least 20 seconds, and covering coughs and sneezes).

If you do not feel well or display any of the symptoms associated with COVID19, or were in contact with someone who has it, please stay home. Please keep in mind that we will be broadcasting our Sunday and Wednesday worship services through our website www.lccnisswa.org. Online giving is also available via our website.

We recognize that events are moving quickly and we are prepared to take all measures necessary to do our part in limiting the spread of the disease. As things change, we will continue to be in touch with our members via email and on our website.

A final word: In 1527, Martin Luther addressed anxious Germans who were themselves facing the prospect of an epidemic. His counsel to his parishioners and compatriots is still applicable. Above all else, he wrote, the Christian's duty is to care for one's neighbor. Taking care of the neighbor, according to Luther, includes caring for the most vulnerable, following the best medical advice available, and avoiding unnecessary risks. As we face our own challenges five centuries later, we may take heart in his confidence that God is living and active, working always for the good of God's people, and equipping us to care for and love one another as Christ has loved us. We are, ultimately, a people of hope, and so I encourage you to pray with confidence for our congregation, for health professionals and first responders, for our civic leaders, and for the most vulnerable among us, that together we may weather the challenges in front of us with equal measures of courage and compassion.

Blessings,

Pastor Drew Bakken