



March 11, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you in Christ's name.

I write this e-mail to inform you of some steps that we have taken at St. Paul's in response to the spread of the flu and the coronavirus. These steps include:

- **Pastors washing hands** prior to Communion distribution (this has always been done)
- **Assisting Elders washing hands** prior to Communion distribution
- Installation of **hand sanitizer dispensers** in all school and church buildings (months ago)
- Pastors not shaking hands as they greet people after worship services (began last Wednesday)
- Lenten dinners being served by **individual servers** rather than everyone helping themselves and thereby touching the serving utensils (begins this Wednesday)
- **Classrooms sprayed with disinfectant** that is electrostatically charged, causing it to stick to surfaces and kill germs effectively (began late fall)
- **All building interiors sprayed** (including ministry building and sanctuary) with same procedure (next week)

Please be assured that we are monitoring the news to be informed about the spread of these viruses and will take more extreme action if it is warranted. I hope you agree that while we do want to take prudent, responsible steps to safeguard everyone at St. Paul's, we also do not want to overreact with unnecessary and drastic measures that only increase anxiety levels. We pray for all who are impacted by these viruses and for the medical personnel who are treating them. As the Psalmist reminds us, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

Thank you.

Pastor Thomas

Rev. Dr. Glen Thomas, Senior Pastor
St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School



March 13, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you in Christ's name.

As you may be aware, earlier today St. Louis County Executive Sam Page issued a proclamation prohibiting gatherings of more than 250 people. He also indicated that he does not have the authority to apply this ruling to churches and schools.

I have communicated with several of our congregational leaders and we are planning to go ahead with our regular worship schedule this weekend. We do not anticipate having 250 people at any given service this weekend, especially with it being Spring Break for our school. In addition, we are taking precautions in addition to those I outlined in my Wednesday morning communication to you. These include:

- **Not distributing worship bulletins** that have already been used to worshipers at a future service.
- Narrowing down the choices at the **Fellowship Breakfast** and having those items served by **designated servers** instead of everyone having direct access to all items.
- Having offering plates stationed near all exit points **instead of passing offering plates** during the services.

As I write this communication, we only have two confirmed cases of coronavirus in Missouri and only one in the St. Louis area. Two additional individuals in Missouri are reported to have tested "presumptive positive."

If you or any member of your family is feeling ill, please stay home.

Attending worship this weekend and probably for at least the remainder of this month, is going to be an individual decision that each of us will need to make given our age and overall health. Please know that I understand, respect, and support your decision, whatever it might be.

If you choose to stay home and would like to continue making financial offerings, you may click on this [link](#) to make your offerings online.

Back in the 1520s, Martin Luther wrote concerning a Black Death Plague that was ravaging the population. I thought you might find this interesting:

Therefore I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. IF God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely, as stated above. See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God” (Luther’s Works, v. 43, p. 132).

Like Luther, we pray to God for mercy, take prudent and appropriate action, and serve our neighbor in need.

Once again, I want to assure you that we are monitoring news concerning the coronavirus and, if warranted, will take additional steps.

If you have any questions or concerns, please be in touch.

Finally, some helpful words to remember from Paul: “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

Pastor Thomas

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