



Ascension Lutheran Church

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December 11, 2020

Re: In-Person Worship & ELCIC's Appeal in Support of Students in the ELCJHL

Dear Friends in Christ,

On Wednesday, December 9, Premier Jason Kenny announced **additional mandatory, province-wide restrictions**, in order to help slow the spread of Covid-19 and to help protect all Albertans and our health care system. These new province wide mandatory restrictions will be in place at least until January 12, 2021. These new measures now include **no** indoor or outdoor social gatherings, as well as restrictions on out-of-town travelers and visitors. Weddings and funerals services are still limited to 10 people “and must be held in a public place” such as a church or funeral home. Receptions are still not permitted. Effective Sunday, December 13, “Faith services are limited to 15% of fire code occupancy for in-person attendance” as well as mandatory masking and physical distancing between households. Further information is available on the **alberta.ca** website (Stronger public health measures – Bend the curve).

As mentioned in my previous pastoral letters, with these kind of restrictions in mind, ALC Council still believes that our best course of action is to postpone all future in-person worship services and meetings for the remainder of the year, including Christmas Eve/Day.

I am more than aware of how disappointing it is not to be able to worship together or to be with one's family and friends; especially on Christmas Eve/Day. I am also aware of the personal and communal grief we are feeling at this time. Dealing with this pandemic for the past nine months has been burdensome and frightening. So, allow me to share with you a part of the story we will hear from Luke's narrative on Christmas Eve from our pre-recorded service to be shown on our website. It's part of the message that the angels brought to the shepherds: *“Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people...”* This my friends includes us and it is a reminder that we are not alone in this world; that God is with us during this pandemic and in all other struggles we face.

On another note, I want to take this opportunity to invite you to support the ELCIC's Appeal in Support of ELCJHL Students in Jordan and the Holy Lands. Please view Bishop Susan Johnson's & Bishop Ibrahim Azar's videos on our church website to gain more insight into our relationship with the ELCJHL and its schools. Donations may be made directly to the ELCIC in Winnipeg, MB., or through your church offerings. Please mark ELCJHL Appeal on your envelop, your cheque, or mention it in your e-Transfer.

In closing, I ask that you continue to pray for each other, for church council, for all who are isolated or lonely, for our seniors and shut-ins, for the vulnerable in our community, for all who are affected by Covid-19; for our federal and provincial leaders, for scientists and manufactures developing and testing vaccines and for our front-line workers and essential workers who bear the burden of this pandemic.

Let us pray:

Merciful God, in the stillness of our souls we listen for your voice to know again that you are God. Quiet our restless hearts with the knowledge that you are near us, keeping watch over your own. Rekindle our faith and light the lamp of hope within our hearts. Then take us by the hand into each day that lies ahead, for where you lead, we can confidently go with Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
(EvLW Pastoral Care p.182)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15-13

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Bruce