



## Good Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Deacon Keith A. Miller

November 12, 2020

Good Hope Sisters and Brothers,

Grace and peace to you all!

Over the past few weeks, we've asked you to provide your thoughts on the possibility of resuming limited in-sanctuary in-person worship. Thank you to all who prayed for this congregation during this time, and who provided input. From the comments, we know that there are wide ranging opinions regarding returning to in-sanctuary in-person worship (and nearly everybody responded that they *desire* to return to in-sanctuary in-person worship), but the majority of the responses said that, given the number of COVID-19 cases in our communities, you are not yet comfortable returning to worshipping inside the sanctuary. On Tuesday November 10<sup>th</sup>, your Council met to discuss and debate and do the best we can to hear the Holy Spirit's voice. Council unanimously voted not to resume in-sanctuary in-person worship at this time. Council also agreed to monitor the COVID-19 data closely, and will review and discuss the data at every Council meeting (and as the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic reduces ... as the number of cases near Good Hope decreases ... your Council will act accordingly.) Additionally, this past week, all the congregations in SE Michigan received a letter from our Bishop, the Rev. Dr. Donald Kreiss, encouraging the suspension of in-sanctuary in-person worship at this time. The action that your Council took is aligned to Bishop Kreiss' recommendations (his letter is re-printed on the back of this communication for your information.)

I am confident that we will return to in-sanctuary in-person worship again ... I am confident that we will be singing together loudly ... that we will commune together as one body of Christ ... and that we will shed a tear of joy on that day. But until that day occurs, we'll continue to provide online worship and in-person drive-in church (if you haven't joined us for drive-in church, check it out ... it feels like church, because it is church.) And we are invited to remember this absolute truth ... that no matter what happens, God is walking with us through all the difficult and hard times in our lives.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay spiritual.

Your brother in Christ,

Deacon Keith (DK)



**Rev. Dr. Donald P. Kreiss, Bishop**

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November 5, 2020

Dear Friends of Southeast Michigan,

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

By now I expect that many of you are aware of the most recent and alarming spike in our local COVID-19 positivity rates. I am not clear whether we are now living into a “second wave” of COVID-19 infections. I am certain that our Christian duty to love one another now calls us back to a more vigorous response in order to keep each other safe and healthy.

In consultation with synod leaders, it is my strongest recommendation that congregations in the Southeast Michigan Synod once again **refrain from indoor in-person worship starting November 15th**. Synod staff will be available virtually as preachers and worship leaders. Even as I make this recommendation, I am so proud of the way that many of our congregations made significant changes to their worship practices and observed our earlier guidelines. You showed remarkable energy, creativity and faithfulness as you made these adjustments. I also recognize that many of us are tired of remote worship, that colder weather makes it more difficult to gather outside, and that for many of our members this may feel like a disappointing step backwards.

However, we have now had positive COVID-19 cases in many of our congregations. And while we believe the precautions, we have in place have been largely effective in preventing the spread of the disease during worship, the levels of infection in our communities have now passed the benchmarks set by health experts and medical professionals at the start of the pandemic. We follow the guidelines established by [www.globalepidemics.org](http://www.globalepidemics.org) that recommend suspending in person activities when case counts go above 25/100,000 (red). Most of our counties are already red or heading there soon. Again, I believe that as Christians we are called to care for our neighbors and the most vulnerable among us, including those who work to care for the sick, the medically fragile, and those whose health is already compromised. This is not an easy step to take, but it is the right one.

Leaders and members of our congregations can check here ([www.globalepidemics.org](http://www.globalepidemics.org)) to keep updated on the rates of infection in your community. As those numbers begin to drop, we will quickly revisit this recommendation and our previous protocols. In the meanwhile, I ask you to keep your parish, your community, our synod and our nation in your prayers as we work together to defeat this disease and to return to “normal” life.

I keep you in my prayers,

Bishop Don Kreiss