



Bringing the Light of Christ to All Creation

MORNING STAR LUTHERAN CHURCH



April 2020



March 27, 2020

To the Saints of the Nebraska Synod:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear...” --Psalm 46

Dear Friends in Christ:

In a time such as this, in which threats with names like virus and recession are piled on top of countless other less-specific uncertainties, I call you to remember the promise of the Word in texts like that above. Beneath everything that feels unsure, we stand on the Good News of God’s grace in Jesus Christ, and the assurance of his constant presence.

I’m writing to remind you of that truth, and because some have asked for clear guidance for a variety of matters. Please understand that what I share here isn’t put forward as “commandments from the bishop,” but as counsel from the synod’s pastor. Every congregation, leader, and member will need to make thoughtful decisions appropriate to their situation. In the acknowledgement that I may be wrong, I offer the following counsel:

Not gathering for worship: while the information is not always clear or consistent and the temptation is strong to gather in person—we miss each other!—we have an obligation of love to our neighbor not to endanger her or him by violating guidelines put in place for the sake of the community’s health. My desire to be with others does not trump the reality that I may be the source of another’s infection. I urge congregations to follow community directives on avoiding or limiting gatherings until those directives are lifted.

Holy Communion practices: the Lutheran understanding of the Sacrament of the Table is that it is a bread-and-cup experience of Christ’s presence in a flesh-and-blood gathering of his people. While deeply important to believers, it is not essential to salvation, and there are times when we may, voluntarily or

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Worship Times

Saturday Service
Sunday Services

5:30^{PM}
8:30^{AM} & 10:30^{AM}

otherwise, fast from receiving it. My counsel, affirming the guiding principles of the ELCA, would be simply not to celebrate the sacrament in any form until we are able to gather in person again. This is a truly exceptional time, and I recognize that congregations, in consultation with their pastors, may choose another practice for the duration of the current situation. Our pastoral leaders are well-trained theologians sensitive to ministry in their context. Trust them. And know that when “normal” returns, exceptional practices will no longer be necessary.

Offerings and finances: your congregation is even more reliant on your support when you can't gather in person. Now is the perfect time for your congregation to set up online options for receiving offerings—and of course one can always send a check in the mail. I urge congregations to prioritize staff salaries and benefits should decisions about expenses need to be made. Our office is working to stay abreast of help available for congregations through the Mission Investment Fund, the ELCA Credit Union, and other sources, as well as understanding what federal stimulus-related resources, if any, congregations might access. In this uncertain time, *those of us with the means to do so need to step up our generosity*, recognizing that there are those whose means have changed drastically. We are all in this together, and we share our burdens and our blessings.

Holy Week and Easter: the holiest time of our year is approaching, and we almost certainly will not yet be able to gather in person. Most of our congregations are finding ways to share worship online, by phone, or by mailing in-home worship resources to members. I'm certain this will be true for all of Holy Week and Easter. While we can't change the date of Easter, every Sunday is a celebration of the Resurrection, so if your congregation chooses to make the first Sunday you're able to gather again in person your celebration of Easter, with all the music, decoration, and festive elements of Easter Sunday, do so with joy.

Care for others: I am humbled and awed by the creativity and energy I see as members and congregations of this church invest themselves in innovative ways of staying connected with those most isolated and alone, providing food and more for those most negatively impacted, partnering with neighboring congregations to provide inspiration, encouragement, and worship, and so much more. Such faithfulness. *Thank you, church—for being church!*

Care for self: the radical shift in daily life is draining on all of us, and this new reality is going to stretch on for some time. Please, pace yourself. Limit your exposure to news, to social media, to anything that compounds uncertainty or distress. Breathe deeply. Take the time to pray. Be patient with yourself (and with those who live with you). Remember that you are God's beloved creation. Care for yourself as such.

We are all in this together—with one another and with the God we know most fully through the life, sufferings, death, and *resurrection* of Jesus Christ. Be encouraged. Have hope. Know you are prayed for, cared about, and much appreciated.

The Nebraska Synod staff are here to serve and support to the best of our ability. We are committed to keeping you informed—while being sensitive to the vast amount of information being shared these days. Thank you for your prayers. Please know you are in ours.

Yours in Christ,
Brian D. Maas, Bishop

Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries

Morning Star Lutheran Church is seeking candidates for a new full-time position, Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries. This position will demonstrate congregational leadership with family ministries as well as cross-generational faith formation. Applicants must demonstrate skills for team ministry, excellent communication, and the ability to relate to people of all ages. A bachelor's degree or equivalent experience is preferred. Please contact Pastor Chris Hawkins at 402-393-5553 or PastorHawkins@MorningStarOmaha.org.



faith at HOME



There are so many questions with few answers to the things that are rapidly changing in our world today. Pastor Chris and Pastor Glenn have been hosting “virtual” Bible studies that are available for you to watch at your convenience online at www.MorningStarOmaha.org.

In addition to that, the ELCA has put together some great resources for you and your children or grandchildren to dig deeper in your faith. For more information, visit www.MinistryLinks.online/faith-at-home.html.

Daily devotion books are available for April, May & June. Call the Church Office to have one sent to you.



MORNING STAR
LUTHERAN CHURCH

NEED A PLACE TO WORSHIP Sunday?

**Join us for an online
service at 10:00 a.m.**

We understand how important it is to keep people safe during this time, but we also know the importance of community and gathering. Join us for a time of worship, prayer & fellowship together during these uncertain times.

Go to www.MorningStarOmaha.org to watch with us or join us on Facebook/[MorningStarLutheranOmaha](https://www.facebook.com/MorningStarLutheranOmaha).



Holy Week Virtual Services

Palm Sunday	Sunday, April 5	10:00 ^{AM}
Maundy Thursday	Thursday, April 9	7:00 ^{PM}
Good Friday	Friday, April 10	7:00 ^{PM}
Easter Celebration	Sunday, April 12	10:00 ^{AM}

Join us LIVE on [Facebook.com/MorningStarLutheranOmaha](https://www.facebook.com/MorningStarLutheranOmaha) at the above times or watch at your convenience at

www.MorningStarOmaha.org!

MISSIONS & OUTREACH

Morning Star...a light in the heart of Omaha & Beyond

Green Envelope

Habitat for Humanity, a program dear to the heart of Morning Star, continues to be the recipient for our Green Envelope offering April. Morning Star Lutheran Church is part of a 15-church coalition working together to build a new home each year with Habitat.

Nearly 75% of Omaha families earning less than \$40k a year are paying more than they can afford for housing, not leaving enough for other necessities like good nutrition, health care, transportation, savings or education. Habitat Omaha works with families to help them successfully become homeowners.



Even though the Douglas County Health Department has limited our ability to meet until further notice, you can still help Habitat with the Green Envelope offering. Just mail your earmarked donation or donate online securely through our website. Thank you for continuing to be a light of Christ to ALL creation!



Thank!
You!

God bless the nimble fingers that knit the lovely prayer shawls which have been given to so many of us. Mine was given to me early in November when I was hospitalized at Methodist. I use it every day. Thank you, again!

In Christ's Love,
Rae Austin



The Prayer Shawl team have made hand-crafted blankets for those in need. Healing and God's peace have been prayed over each one. Feel free to take one from the Gathering Space. If you have some free time on your hands during this crisis, feel free to crochet or knit some!



N95 masks may be greatly needed in our community and beyond to treat patients. We can change that. Follow the instructions below and drop off any completed masks to Morning Star. Thank you to all who have already dropped off so many of these masks! We have been delivering to medical staff in need as they

become available!

Visit this link for instructions:
<https://turbanproject.com/patterns>

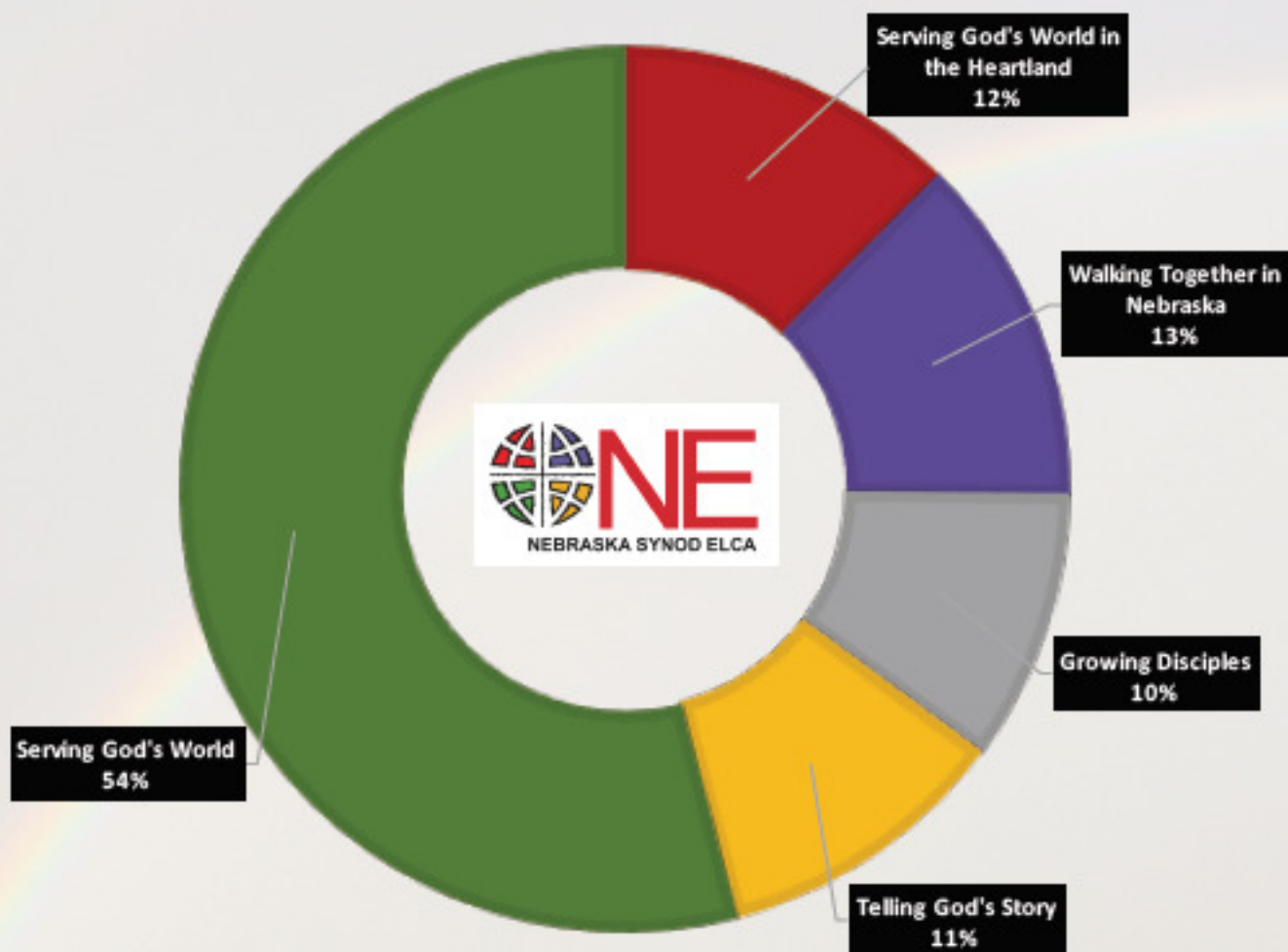


If you are looking for a way to continue being the Light of Christ to ALL from home, Pastor Sara Jensen invites you to write notes or have your kids draw pictures to help encourage the Immanuel residents. Take a photo of the note or drawing and send it to Pastor Sara Jensen via email. Immanuel Communities will then print them and distribute them to the residents. Send photos to sjensen@immanuelcommunities.com.



Bored at home? Need to turn over your home library? The **Little Free Library** is on the parking island on 85th Avenue and has lots of new-to-you books to read. Take a book or leave a book. They are free!

A Spectrum of Your Gifts at Work



Together as the Nebraska Synod we are growing disciples, walking together, and serving God's world. Through the stewardship of the synod's resources, over 50% of synod contributions are shared annually with the larger Evangelical Lutheran Church in America supporting and doing ministry around the globe. Over \$400,000 is contributed annually to serving God's world closer to home in the Heartland, and nearly \$450,000 is shared to do ministry as we are walking together in Nebraska. Through your support and participation, we tell God's story of grace to a world in need. Thank you for supporting the synod, responding to God's call, and for being a part of the church together.



WHERE DOES MY OFFERING GO?



ELCA members in more than 9,300 congregations in the United States and Caribbean give approximately **\$1.75 billion** in regular offering to support ELCA ministries in their local communities and worldwide. When members give through their **congregations**, a percentage of that money is then shared with the local **synod** and the national **churchwide organization**.

This unrestricted giving, called Mission Support, gives us both the foundation and the fuel to do God's work in the world and a portion of the gifts circle back to support ministries in synods and local congregations. Of these unrestricted gifts, the churchwide organization receives around 2.6 percent. This represents the largest portion of the ELCA churchwide organization's operating budget.

Your Mission Support helps fund the following churchwide ministries:

Grow the ELCA in the United States



Plant and support
357 new congregations.

- **Enable congregations to renew their ministries** and reach out to their surrounding communities.
- **Work together** with our African Descent, American Indian and Alaska Native, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latino/Latina members to develop networks and resources for ministry.
- **Develop and share resources** for faith, discipleship, prayer and worship.

Grow the Lutheran church around the world



Send 230 missionaries in more than 48 countries, and more than 84 Young Adults in Global Mission in 11 country programs.

- **As a member of The Lutheran World Federation, we're in communion with 145 member churches** and directly connected to 85 companion churches in other countries.
- **Accompany new Lutheran churches**, expand ministries, and train leaders and evangelists.

Provide coordination and support for churchwide ministries



Maintain constituent database, including 1.1 million records of rostered and lay leaders, members, donors and congregations.

- **Preserve and maintain archives and historic records** of the ELCA and its predecessor bodies.
- **Provide office space, equipment and human resources** for staff and operations.
- **Process 150,000 gifts** to ELCA ministries.
- **Equip congregations and synods** with resources to assist in risk management and legal matters.

Support and develop current and future leaders in the ELCA



Recruit, prepare and implement a system for the assignment of 9,900 rostered ministers.

- **Support the work** of seven ELCA seminaries and 26 colleges and universities.
- **Identify, connect and provide** ministry resources and opportunities for networking for lay leaders.
- **Offer events and leadership opportunities** for youth and young adults.

Invest in **technology** and **communications**



Design and maintain communications tools

to strengthen our Lutheran identity and grow awareness of our church and its mission and ministries.

- **Connect members with one another** through new technology and systems.

Provide **governance** and **leadership**

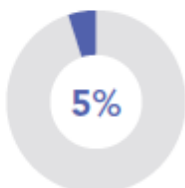


65

Coordinate meetings and support for 65 synodical bishops.

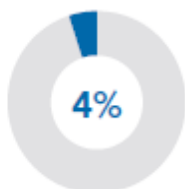
- **Organize lay and clergy leaders from across the church to serve** on the governance boards and committees that provide guidance and oversight for ELCA ministries.

Grow and sustain financial resources



Develop and promote efforts related to stewardship education, financial literacy, mission interpretation and growth in giving to all church ministries.

Address social issues and **work for justice**



1 in 50

Support social ministry organizations, such as Lutheran Services in America, to impact the lives of **1 in 50** Americans.

- **Engage** in churchwide study and deliberation to create social statements and resources that address social, political, environmental and other public issues.
- **Equip** members and leaders to advocate with lawmakers in order to support policies that promote justice and peace.

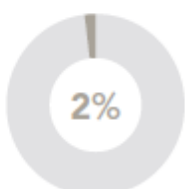
Your designated gifts to ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response provide additional funds annually to address hunger, poverty and suffering around the world.

Engage in **research** and **strategic planning**



Research and analyze trends that impact the ELCA and develop innovative strategies to improve mission and ministry in the 21st century.

Sustain **ecumenical** and **interfaith relationships**



Facilitate dialogue and common action among communities of other faiths, including the development of resources and communications for ELCA congregations.

- **Seek unity in faith and life** with all Lutherans and six full communion partners.



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331 S. 85th Avenue
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Address Correction Requested



To honor the memory of Bill Winstrom,
we have with thoughts on his
international engagement sent school
packages to support 200 children's
education.

Bill, Rest in Peace!

Love, Anette & Sol

Prayer Request

Prayers

Delores Albanese
Rae Austin

Rich Fiddelke
Ken Hagemann
Rick Jacobsen

Eunice Levisay
Gloria Miller
Marge Morgan

Friends & Loved Ones of Morning Star

- Connie (*friend of the Maxwell's*)
- Craig Kochen (*Lori Mueller's brother*)
- Dave, Beth & Family (*brother-in-law of the Maxwell's*)
- Deanna, Jan & Jane (*friends of Deb Hysack*)
- Debbie (*friend of the Moy's*)
- Don (*JoAnn Wollenburg's brother*)
- Jennifer (*Gloria Miller's cousin*)
- Joan & Margaret (*friends of the Mueller's*)
- Joseph & Dorothy (*friends of the Wollenburgs*)
- Judy Olson (*Stacie Neussendorfer's mother*)
- Kate Richling
- Lindsay (*Janice & Roger Hass' granddaughter*)
- Mary (*Marguerite McGill's sister*)
- McKee Family (*friends of the Moy's*)
- Mikaela Z. (*cousin of Dawn Karnish*)
- Nicky Olson (*friend of Stephanie Jensen*)
- Steve, Whitney, Michael & Elois Smith (*Michelle's family*)
- Taylor & Todd Koers

Sympathies

- The family of Betty Wilson