



March 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want you to know that I, along with our President (Bruce Dellinger), our Dean of Elders (Gordon Gruhn) and our resident Physician (Dr. David Pietrasiuk), have been monitoring developments regarding the COVID-19 outbreak with the health and safety of our preschool students, staff, church members and pastors at the forefront of our decision making. While at this time there are no known cases of COVID-19 at the Beach or in our congregation (and we believe the risk remains low), it is our responsibility to be cautious and decisive in our efforts to prevent the spread of this illness.

At this time, we will continue to gather for worship at our regularly scheduled worship times: 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. We have implemented small changes in our communion practice that will have a big impact. We have eliminated shaking hands during the sharing of the peace. We will not, at this time, be taking the offering by passing the plate but will, instead, place the offering plates at the entrance to the sanctuary (your offering can be placed in the plates as you return to your seats following Holy Communion). At this time the pastors will not be greeting the people as they leave worship. Hand sanitizing stations are located at both entrances to the church.

Though vigilant, we are neither anxious nor troubled. ***“The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God”*** (Phil. 4:5-6). We have full confidence and reassurance in Christ, as well as the responsibility to serve those given into our care. I am particularly mindful of the people who are at greater risk, such as infants and those in the nursing homes we serve. Those who are immunocompromised, have underlying health issues or are elderly and frail, need to seriously consider staying home from worship at this time. You will be able to watch the service after 2:00 p.m. on YouTube every Sunday. I am also trying to organize a “live stream” on our Bethlehem Lutheran Church Facebook page. This will be a live feed at 11:00 a.m. beginning this Sunday, March 15th.

Again, at this time, the risk to the Bethlehem community is and remains very low. Therefore, we will continue to have services as scheduled. Each of our Sunday services has approximately 100 worshipers, which is far below the threshold of 250 people for cancellation.

“Do not be afraid!” is the phrase God spoke throughout the Scriptures as He called His people to a life of courage in the face of uncertainty. And I believe He’s speaking this same word to us today as we enter an unprecedented season of uncertainty in our community, our nation, and the world. Jesus’ church is not one that shrinks back in fear, casts off her confidence, puts her head in the sand or bows to societal pressure. Instead, she brings light to the darkness, hope to the hopeless, healing to the sick and life to the dying! This has been the church’s mission throughout the ages, even during times of intense persecution, war and plagues. This will continue to be our mission at Bethlehem.

Remember, too, that **we have plenty of hand sanitizer and our bathrooms are stocked with toilet paper!**

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). You all remain in my prayers.

In Christ,

Pastor Dana Allen Brones
Sr Pastor
Bethlehem Lutheran Church