

"The Lord is Our Refuge and Strength"

It is wearying to continue dealing with the pandemic and the physical distancing and wearing face coverings in public and sanitizing to help keep other people and our own families and ourselves safe. But the Lord continues to strengthen and guide us and give us peace.

As our church continues to do ministry in these uncertain times, we have some things to share with you:

(1) This coming Sunday, June 28, during our online worship service, I will lead us in celebrating Holy Communion. The Church Council approved my proposal, supported by the Worship and Music Committee, to do this at least once a month. So please have some bread (or crackers) and wine (or juice) available to participate. At the beginning of the pandemic, wider church leaders encouraged pastors and churches to "fast" from Holy Communion for a time. There are no church rules about it, but Communion is normally shared in the gathered community. However, we think it is time to "break the fast" and celebrate Communion again. You may participate at home with your family members or by yourself---but spiritually, we will be together. The Lord comes in this way to nourish and strengthen us.

(2) Our worship services are now being broadcast on TV. With our new worship format (with music, singing, readings, youth messages, sermons, prayers, etc.--with many people participating in leadership), we are now able to broadcast on the local Whitewater TV station---Spectrum 990. The services are shown at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. each day. You can continue to access the worship videos through the church website (firstenglishlutheranchurch.360unite.com), but for those whose internet access is limited, this gives you an option. Please tune in!

(3) Re-Gathering Task Force. The Church Council has formed this task force to make plans for a gradual and careful process of re-gathering for some in-person meetings, groups, or worship in the coming weeks and/or months. Jan Bilgen, a longtime member who has experience in leading this kind of a process, will chair the task force. We all miss gathering together, but we want to be able to do it with less risk. Members will be receiving surveys in the coming days (by e-mail, for you who have given us your e-mail addresses, and by regular mail, for others). Please complete and return these surveys as soon as possible (by July 6), to provide input to the task force. Our core values, responsible love for our neighbors and concern for the

most vulnerable, and the advice of public health and wider church officials, will continue to guide our decision-making.

(4) Phone Tree. Some of our people are well-connected with others by phone, e-mail, and other forms of online connection, but some are not. Many of our Befreinders and other volunteers have started making calls to help keep in touch with people. We are grateful for this important ministry. As always, do not hesitate to reach out to me, by e-mail or by phone (608-354-2058). And do whatever you can to connect with others who may feel isolated during this difficult time.

(5) Finally, thank you for your support for FELC during this time. Also, I want to invite you, if you are able, to contribute to our Special Offering to help those who are hungry and suffering financially at this time. You can make checks out to "First English Lutheran Church," mark "hunger" on the memo line, and mail them to the church. These donations will be given to the Whitewater Food Pantry, Community Space (food ministry in Whitewater), and the ELCA Hunger Appeal.

I am praying for you, and I pray that you will know God's presence and love, that you will be safe and healthy, and that you will be strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Steve