

"I Have Called You By Name, You Are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1)

The church is never closed, even when the buildings are. The church is people. I continue to be so impressed by you, the members of First English Lutheran Church, as we all respond to this new situation of the pandemic. So many of you continue to pray with and care for your families; to read Scripture; to worship online; to use the resources on our Facebook page; to work faithfully (whether in public or from home); to give offerings to support the church, to feed the hungry and to support ministries in our community and world; to attend meetings on Zoom and conference calls; to e-mail, text and phone others, especially those who feel isolated or alone; staying home or taking all needed precautions when you go out, to care for the health of others as well as yourself. You are the people of God, living out your faith in these uncertain times. God says to us: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Is. 43:1).

I want to give you an update on some important things that are happening.

(1) This coming Sunday, July 19, during our online worship service, I will lead us in celebrating Holy Communion. Please have some bread (or crackers) and wine (or juice) available to participate. You are invited to participate with your family or by yourself. Though separated physically, we will be together spiritually. Christ comes to us in this holy sacrament, to feed us with Himself, to forgive our sins, to nourish and strengthen us in faith and love. We are one with Christ and one with each other.

(2) Please participate in our worship services online, on our church website: firstenglishlutheranchurch.360unite.com Please participate in the prayers, the responsive readings, the hymns and songs, as well as listening to the youth message and the sermon.

(3) Our worship services are also broadcast on TV. See the service on the local Whitewater TV station---Spectrum 990. The services are shown at 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon each day. Please tune in!

(4) Re-Gathering Task Force. Thank you to all who submitted or sent in your "re-gathering surveys". The intent was to include everyone, but if you did not see the survey, please contact Tammy at: secretaryfelcww@gmail.com The 8-person task force has been meeting. It is chaired by Jan Bilgen. **The task force starts with focusing on our shared values: responsible love for our neighbors, caring for the most vulnerable, and prioritizing the**

safety of members, visitors and staff. Those core values, along with the advice of public health and wider church officials, guides deliberations. The task force will be considering **5 areas: (a) Physical Space, (b) Staffing, (c) Outreach, (d) Worship, and (5) Communication.** For each area they will follow **the IPFI process: Inform** (liability, safety, congregational input). **Practical** (logistics and costs); **Flexibility** (review; increase/decrease limitations); **Inclusiveness** (check to make sure plan is inclusive of all). Thank you all for your support of this process.

(5) Thank you for your faithful support for FELC during this time. I also want to thank you for giving to our **Special Offering** to help those who are hungry or 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.

(6) Synod Assembly. Our South-Central Synod of Wisconsin has twice postponed the annual assembly because of the pandemic. We will be gathering in an all-virtual assembly on **Saturday, August 29.** In addition to other business, we will elect a new bishop. I will attend, along with three other members of the congregation.

Feel free to call me anytime. I am praying for you. And I know that God is with you.

In the strength of Christ,

Pastor Steve