



Messiah Lutheran Church

7050 35th Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98115
Pastor Trevor Mankin

March 19, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

We live in a time of rapid change and fluid information and updates regarding the outbreak of Covid-19, particularly here in the state of Washington. As of last Sunday morning, Governor Inslee had prohibited gatherings of 250 people or more. Sunday afternoon, that was reduced to gatherings of 50 people or more. Then, President Trump advised that public gatherings should be limited to no more than 10 people.

Following the instructions of St. Paul, I ask that you continue to pray for our leaders at the local, state, and federal levels.

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:1-5 ESV)

In response to the rapidly changing health crisis, our intention as church leaders is to be thoughtful and act with wisdom, confidence, and faith in Christ, not hysteria or panic. In our public gatherings so far, we have worked hard to follow the health protocols and social distancing guidelines outlined by our governor and health officials.

By further limiting contact and exposure, we can help to reduce the risk of spread of infection. As several reported cases have shown, one can be a carrier of the virus, exhibit no symptoms, never show symptoms, and yet spread the virus to someone who is considered at risk or vulnerable.

It is for all these reasons, for the sake of our neighbors who are at risk and most vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus, that our Congregation President, Elders, and I have made the painful, yet precautionary decision to suspend all public worship services, all Bible classes, and all activities here at Messiah until April 5th. This decision is based on the current information from our health officials and may change in the coming days or weeks ahead. If you are currently scheduled to serve as an acolyte, kids message presenter, reader, usher, transporter, Sunday School teacher or a member of Altar Guild—please stay safe and remain at home.

Please know that decision was not made lightly, but thoughtfully and in great anguish; not out of fear, but out of caution and care for those most at risk in our own congregation and communities.

⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4 ESV)

If you are isolated and running short of items (groceries, health needs, etc.) or need any assistance please contact your elder. They would be happy to help as they are able.

We will continue to monitor the situation daily and will revisit and reassess the health situation as it unfolds in the coming days and weeks ahead. We will also continue to communicate any changes or updates to you. Above all, we will continue to provide a number of ways for you to hear and receive God's Word during this time. In an ever-changing world, we rest in the unchanging truth and promises of God's love for us in Christ.

To that end, here are a number of ways we will continue to minister to you in this time:

- Videos of Wednesday Lenten services will start streaming at 7 PM on our website.
- Videos of Sunday morning services will start streaming at 8 AM on our website.
- All online videos can be viewed until replaced by subsequent videos.
- Please check our Facebook Page and Website for information.
- Offerings for the work of Christ among us can be mailed, dropped off, or made through electronic giving on our website.

Finally, while this decision brings me great sadness, I also find great hope and comfort in the gifts God gives us to sustain us even in the darkest and most uncertain of times: His Holy Word, which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; His gracious Name placed upon you in Holy Baptism; His absolution, which forgives our sin; His Supper, which strengthens and nourishes us; His people, each of you, as you care for others in our church, homes, and communities in which we live.

By the grace of God, we will get through this. And we will gather together again in great joy. Together in Christ, we will bear one another's burdens, and by His mercy leading us, we will come through this time of crisis confident in Christ crucified and risen, and all the more joyful in our fellowship together.

For now, I leave you with St. Paul's words to the Philippians:

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-8 ESV)

In HIM,

Pastor Trevor Mankin

Board of Elders: Lee Cohrs, Michael Boomhower, Harry Edmon, Robin Melvin, David Miller, Andrew Petro, Josh Pemberton, Neil Strege
Mark Jorgensen, President