

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

4155 Pickle Road + Oregon, Ohio 43616 + Phone 419-691-9407

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Website: www.princeofpeaceoregon.com

John Genszler, Pastor



DISCIPLESHIP AT HOME
AND IN COMMUNITY

Brothers and Sisters of Prince of Peace,

March 19, 2020

The leadership of Prince of Peace has been monitoring the unprecedented situation in our world and the recommendations from various levels of our government. At this time, we have come to the difficult decision that it is best to suspend services and activities out of love and care for God's people. We pray the circumstances will allow us to resume normal gatherings with Maundy Thursday service (April 9).

The decision to not gather with the Lord's family in collective worship is very difficult. We know the Lord's gift of encouragement we receive as we are gathered. We know God's command to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy" and that we are to "not despise preaching and the Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." As we continue in these everchanging times, we ask you to help us seek ways to gather around the Word even as we refrain from gathering physically.

God also commands us to "Honor your father and mother" and we understand this command includes all those God has given in authority over us. Even though our governmental authorities have not commanded that churches cease to worship together, they have ordered gatherings to be less than 50 and strongly recommended (so far) gatherings be less than 10. Up until now, churches have not been mentioned even when specific types of businesses have been ordered to close. However, with the latest Situation Report from the Emergency Operations Center, religious organizations are specifically requested to find alternatives to in-person gatherings. We are told in God's Word to honor the authorities God gives us, but we do not blindly follow them – we obey God rather than men when orders from the authorities require us to disobey God. We are thankful that our authorities have not commanded us to stop receiving God's gifts, but to seek alternative ways for the health of our neighbor.

God requires, in His command to "not murder", that we "do not hurt or harm our neighbor in their body, but help and support them in every physical need." We pray that the Lord would guard each of us in the Prince of Peace family from the current threat to physical health. However, we do not "tempt God" but rather recognize that God works most often through His people to provide all that is needed in this life – including safety and care.

The leadership decision to suspend services and activities at this time comes from the decision to honor God by caring for His people above clinging to the time-honored ways of gathering. We will continue to care for you through ministry of Word and Sacrament, but in alternate ways for now. As a beginning, Pastor John will share devotions and prayers through the web-

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site (princeofpeaceoregon.com), Facebook (Prince of Peace Luth Church), and PoPBlasts (princeofpeaceblast@gmail.com) If you need help getting connected to any of these tools of communication, please call the church office (419-691-9407) and talk with Julie or Pastor John. You are greatly encouraged to connect with one another in the Word. Call, connect, and care individually and share scripture and prayer.

Ministry of the Sacrament will also continue during this time, but in a different way. You are encouraged to stop by the church building during designated times (which will be given in future communications) to receive communion personally or contact Pastor John and he will set up a time to meet with you.

As we are unable to be gathered and together collect tithes and offerings to the Lord, it is important to remember that offering is never about “giving to church” or “service dues”. Tithes and offerings are always given to the Lord in love, trust, and thanksgiving for the ways He provides all things. Offerings may be given, as always, through mailing, dropping off at the office, or online giving. As the Lord gives to His people, we give back in love, trust, and thanks. Then the Lord gives to His Church so the church may be equipped for the ministry He has given. Ministry continues in different, new, and exciting ways. We pray that the Lord opens our eyes to His work at this time.

With many people unable to work, there are many individuals and families experiencing hardship. If you are in need of help or are able to give help, please contact the church office. One of the blessings of being saved into the Lord’s family is we are able to “share one another’s burdens” in time of need. The early church modeled this well for us in Acts 2 and 4.

As together we experience a time when we cannot gather as church, remember that the Church remains the Body of Christ. Together, we grow and are encouraged through God’s Word and presence, just in different ways. God is bigger than the fear spreading over the world. God brings good from the midst of sorrow and turns mourning into dancing. We pray that He would open our eyes to see how He is at work and open our lips to share His work, His love, His peace, and His hope. What an opportunity we have to share the good news of Hope in Christ Jesus! As Jesus says in John 16, ***“A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home... I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”***

Your brothers in the Peace of Christ,

Prince of Peace Elders
and Pastor John