

Note: This letter is current as of 7:30 a.m. on 5 May 2020.

Dear friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brief summary of this letter:

Now as before, you are free to (preferably) e-mail Pastor Brock or call him if you wish to be added to the schedule of Divine Services. For those already on the schedule for this Sunday and those following, this letter DOES NOT CHANGE what you scheduled with Pastor Brock last Saturday/Sunday. Our website (www.stjohnbingen.com) continues to be updated regularly and e-mails continue to be sent at least weekly to those for whom we have e-mail addresses.

Last Friday, May 1, Governor Holcomb issued Executive Order 20-26, a “Roadmap to Reopen Indiana for Hoosiers, Businesses, and State Government.” This new executive order states that “on or after May 8, 2020, religious services, including wedding ceremonies and funeral services, may continue and will no longer be subject to limits on social gatherings. However, social distancing and other sanitation measures...will continue to apply” (EO 20-26, [14.b]).

To avoid misunderstandings and confusion, please note carefully the distinction between “religious services” and “social gatherings.” While social gatherings are currently limited to twenty-five (25) or fewer people, religious services are not. Nonetheless, as the size of gatherings increases at Bingen, so must our diligence and care in sanitation measures and still-mandated distancing. We will therefore continue to increase, not decrease, our efforts to receive the Lord’s means of grace both faithfully and responsibly. Now as always, your patience and understanding are requested and appreciated.

For the last six weeks (since 29 March 2020), we have safely and effectively maintained a schedule of small-gathering Divine Services every thirty minutes on Saturdays, Sundays, and throughout the week, serving an average of 220 members each week. Specific and careful measures have ensured that the Lord’s house and entry areas are disinfected and sanitized between each service. Thanks and praise be to God for the church officers and volunteers who have donated countless hours in service to their fellow members’ reception of the Lord’s means of grace. These include: President Don Gresley, Elder Roger and Lisa Hormann, Deacons Chris Hoffman, Mark Laurent, Logan Lepper, and Gary Murdock, Sr., and Altar Guild members Tina Caston and Chris Melcher. Please see the May newsletter or Pastor’s Report to Voters for further information on how Bingen has continued in faith and love throughout this time of trial and for a list of many other members who have provided needed and faithful service throughout these strange times.

This Sunday, the schedule of Divine Services will change to one service every hour beginning at 8 a.m. (and continuing at 9 a.m.; 10 a.m.; 11 a.m. 12noon, etc.) with approximately fifty (50) people at each service. We may be able to increase the number of people at each service in the future, but for now we are keeping it to that number to ensure adequate distancing and time for thorough disinfecting and sanitizing between each service. This schedule will continue the Sundays following until or unless state or local law changes. Now as before, separate appointments / services can be scheduled for elderly and/or vulnerable individuals and/or families. And again, now as before, those who are strictly self-isolating are free in Christ Jesus to remain home at this time. Please contact Pastor Brock if you wish to be added to the schedule of Divine Services. It is best if you e-mail him at PastorBrock@gmail.com, but if that is not possible or practical for you, then feel free to call him on his cell phone at 260-301-1640. Please leave a message if he is unable to answer, and he will call you back as soon as possible. If you do not hear back from him within 24 hours, then you can assume he did not receive your e-mail or voicemail. Please try again. If you are already on the schedule for this Sunday, you need not contact Pastor Brock again.

We continue to update our website regularly (www.stjohnbingen.com), and we are sending out e-mails at least weekly to those for whom we have e-mail addresses. If you wish to receive these e-mail updates, please send Pastor Brock your e-mail address, and he will add it to our records. To those of you without e-mail or internet, your family, neighbors, and friends have been asked and encouraged to share these updates with you.

The Lord bless and keep you in His peace.

In Christ,

Pastor Brock and Pastor Maronde