

March 27, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

Since my first letter concerning worship and events at St. Peter's during the COVID-19 pandemic, things have changed. You are aware of the "Stay at Home" order and what that has meant concerning each of us and our daily lives. These are extenuating circumstances and I understand that. If at any time you feel the need to talk or visit, please contact me at 224-242-4151 (church direct line), 701-340-8324 (cell and text), or pastor@stpetersnorthplato.org and I will make myself available to you.

We find ourselves in a time of chaos, uncertainty, and fear over the Coronavirus 2019 known as COVID-19. My first counsel to you comes from Holy Scripture. First, I go to **Psalm 56:4, 8-11** (ESV) where it says, "⁴In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? ⁸Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll—are they not in your record? ⁹Then my enemies will turn back when I call for help. By this I will know that God is for me. ¹⁰In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise—¹¹in God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me?" Then go to **Psalm 46:1-3** (ESV) which says, "¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ²Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, ³though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling." *Selah*

As at other times of great turmoil in history, people have questions about why they are here and what is their part in all of this. People even feel as if their existence during such times is pointless since events are as distressing as they are. We look to Esther 4:14 (ESV) which says, "¹⁴For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. **And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**" The added emphasis is mine and this should be your focus from these verses. Even though it pertains to Esther and her situation, it can and does apply to us and the specific times in our lives.

God created each of us and we have a purpose that plays a part in Jesus' work of reconciling fallen humankind to God and to each other. God has placed us where we are for **such a time as this**. This is understood when we are obedient to the Holy Spirit as He calls us into the world and the specific tasks God has for each of us.

As the world continues to struggle with all that is going on we place our trust and hope in the crucified, risen Savior, Jesus Christ. This does not mean that we neglect common sense and the counsel and direction given to us by those researching and treating the virus. In the Fourth Commandment, we are commanded to respect and obey the government and its decisions to try and deal with this disease. Also, we should not go to such lengths that would harm our neighbor as commanded in the Eighth Commandment.

Understanding all this and placing our trust in God, I am counseling you to take the necessary precautions for your specific situation. While we had hoped to continue to offer worship services and other activities, the Governor's "Stay at Home" order cancelled all of that. We continue to comply with this order until it is lifted. Regarding givings, you may visit the church's website and give online by clicking on the "GIVE NOW" link at the top of the Home page, clicking on the "GIVE NOW" button, and filling in the form.

Please be aware that our custodian, Fern Petersen, continues to thoroughly clean all our surfaces that people touch with disinfectant. She is taking every precaution and then some to ensure our facility is clean.

In consultation with the church president, vice president, and elders, all worship services and other events are cancelled until the government allows to resume. Abbreviated midweek Lenten services and abbreviated Sunday worship services should be available on our church website by early afternoon on the following Thursday and Monday. We are also trying to have it posted to St. Peter's Facebook page soon after it is recorded. So when you visit the website, put your cursor over the link "SERMONS" at the top of the page, click on "SERMON" and scroll down to the sermon or sermons you would like to listen to.

Martin Luther responded to a letter he received during the civil unrest of his time. The writer asked why anyone would bring a child into the world with all the conflict and brokenness of the world at that time. His response was, "Even if I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would still plant my tree today." His counsel held true then and still holds true today! God calls us to live each day according to His will and not worry about tomorrow as it holds its own issues.

Remember Philippians 4:4-9 (ESV) which says, "⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

These are the plans for now. However, the situation has been very fluid and changing almost daily. Please monitor your phone calls, the website, your texts, emails, and mail for changes. We are working diligently in the Lord's and your best interests. Continue to pray for all that is going on, our leaders, and the church and I continue to pray for each of you. Also know that Rev. Dr. Allan Buss, our District President, reached out to me by phone to inquire about how we as the congregation at St. Peter's are doing. He offered any assistance the District might be able to provide, gave words of encouragement, and prayed for us at the end of our conversation.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you. And be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace. Amen!

With you in His service!

Pastor