

Congregational Update in Response to COVID-19 March 14, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

You are likely well aware of the latest updates and cancellations in our community due to the spreading coronavirus. As of now, we are planning to hold worship as scheduled but to make changes, detailed below, related to social distancing and protecting people who are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. In doing so, we want to take this disease seriously, as our society is doing, but also demonstrate proper trust in the Lord, who is the maker of heaven and earth. These plans may certainly change over the next weeks or months.

We encourage that if you are ill with any viral infection, or if you are at risk of serious effects from COVID-19, you remain home from worship. Please ask for a DVD so that you can see the worship service, and please contact the church office or any pastor if you need pastoral care in person or over the phone.

We will continue weekly worship at this time for those who are able so that we “do not give up meeting together, but rather encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:25) and so that we may hear God’s comfort and receive God’s strength in Word and Sacrament. In Psalm 46, we are reminded that it is God who is our refuge and strength, and our ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, let us not fear, but with confidence use this opportunity also to be the hands and feet of Jesus through our prayers and our care for others.

What changes. For the next few weeks we are planning:

- 1) To avoid shaking hands by pastors, greeters, and ushers. Waves, nods, smiles, and verbal greetings are most welcome!
- 2) To avoid passing offering plates and friendship registers. Offering plates/boxes will be available to deposit your offering.
- 3) To suspend the use of shared children’s busy bags. Parents, please bring your own materials if desired.
- 4) To suspend the practice of common cup communion. All communicants can take an individual cup on the way to communion.
- 5) To encourage people to take the bread at communion by receiving it in your hand. This will limit contact with germs.

What continues. For the next few weeks we are planning:

- 1) To continue all regular weekend and midweek Lenten worship as usual.
- 2) To continue celebrating communion on scheduled weekends. Please receive the bread with an open hand only.

3) To keep you informed about any changes that should happen.

Please, stay tuned to tlcjenera.org or call either pastor for more information. Pastor Nowak's cell phone number is 419-302-5271. Pastor Schmitzer's home phone is 419-365-1350. To ensure that you can receive the most recent information, please, make sure your phone and email are up-to-date with our school secretary. You can call her at 419-326-4685.

In Christ,

Pastor Matthew Nowak