

Dear FLC brothers and sisters in Christ,

The first thing to remember is that we are never alone. God is God still, and even viruses are part of the created order. They aren't good, but they aren't out of God's control. Pray for God's protection for everyone in our families, our church, our community, our state, our country, the world.

Governor DeWine has banned gatherings of over 100 people (religious groups are exempt on the basis of religious freedom). Findlay Mayor Muryn has urged church leaders to follow a 3-week ban and hold their services remotely. Without intervention, our hospitals will be overwhelmed and our most vulnerable will be at risk. We have a large number of congregation members who are at risk, and we care deeply about them.

For this reason, Council has unanimously decided to follow Trinity Lutheran, First Presbyterian, and the large non-denominations in our area and suspend all services (Sunday and Wednesday) for the next three weeks. We will resume services on April 5, Palm Sunday. In the meantime, we will record mini services and put them on our web page, the church office will remain open at the usual times, and small groups will decide for themselves on when they shall meet.

The purpose of the closures is to reduce the spread of the virus by allowing for a 3-week window which will give the virus time to appear in all who are infected so they can self-isolate. As church members, this should be a time for us to slow down and pray for all who are infected. It is a time to draw closer to God and to the community of saints. It will be a challenge for us to stay together as a community when we cannot meet as a church, but through prayer, small group interaction, and wireless communication, we can continue to reach out to each other. Look around you: who is isolated and could use human contact? Be Christ for each other, even for those you normally wouldn't contact.

Pr. Chris, Miriam and I will be meeting this afternoon or early evening to put together a worship service for you to view online

at www.1stlutheranchurch.org. Follow directions when you get there to get to our service. Look for future announcements there, as well.

God's mission through our church continues, even if our physical gathering together is limited/prohibited. The members of First have always been very generous, and we know we can count on your financial support of our ministry. During this crisis, the mortgage still needs to be paid, as do the utilities and insurance. Our staff will still be working to meet the needs of our congregation and help us to stay connected to one another and God's mission in this place. How can you give if you are not here?

- 1) Checks can be mailed to the church.
- 2) You can use online banking via your banking institution to make a digital payment.
- 3) You can go to the church website, www.1stlutheranchurch.org, and once there, go to "forms/gifts" to find information on how to give online.

As Pastor Will from Trinity Lutheran reminds us, it is a wonderful blessing that we are in a Season of Prayer – we are now called to spend extra time this season praying for:

- 1) The other members of our church, particularly those who are most vulnerable to these types of infectious diseases.
- 2) Those in the medical professions who put their health on the line every day to care for those who are sick
- 3) The livelihoods of those who will miss work due to their own, or someone else's, illness
- 4) Those who are working tirelessly to come up with new treatments for these illnesses
- 5) Those who will be isolated and cut off from others for an extended period of time
- 6) Those in under-developed parts of the world who do not have the healthcare system that we have
- 7) Those who are filled with fear and anxiety over this virus

How blessed we are to have faith in times like these! The most common phrase I hear at funerals is this: "Pastor, I don't know how I'd survive this

without my faith.” I feel the same way today. In all our prayers, let’s add one of gratitude for the faith of our fathers, the faith of our mothers, the faith of the other people in our lives, the faith that the Spirit has delivered directly into our souls. Through faith, we will get through this together.

God bless you all,
Pr. Bob