

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The times in which we live are definitely interesting – even challenging. We need to remember that our Lord never told us that our days in this world were going to be easy. However, the thing that we need to remember *even more* is that God is not dead, nor has He abandoned us.

**Isaiah 43:1-3 But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.**

**Matthew 28:20 “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

Because of the restrictions that have been placed upon us by the government in recent days, “normal life” as we know it at Christ Lutheran does not exist at this time. Several changes must be made (on a temporary basis) in order to comply with the state’s recent dictums. None of the decisions that are being made about life here at CLC are being taken lightly, nor are they being done in a vacuum. Both the Elders, the Council leaders, as well as my fellow pastors of the Wausau Circuit of the LCMS have been consulted and asked to share their insights and wisdom.

The biggest change that will be taking place has to do with worship services. Until further notice, all Thursday evening and Sunday morning services are cancelled. Along with this, all Bible classes, confirmation classes, Sunday school classes, meetings, and any other group gatherings are called off until further notice.

Within the last week or so, Ethan Wetmore was brought on staff on a temporary, part-time basis to assist me in carrying out various tasks related to the ministry, and to explore other ways to get God’s Word out to our members and others. I see the Lord’s hand and timing in this move. Ethan’s degree in Video Production will now be put to widespread use.

We are going to be constructing weekly services that will be recorded and available for you to view online. Given the shortness of time and all that needs to be done in preparation for this, the first of these services will probably not be ready until next week. We’ll try to get something out by this Sunday, but that cannot be guaranteed. These recorded services will continue until we are able to meet again face-to-face. For those who cannot view these services online, other options are being discussed; we’ll keep you posted.

Obviously, we will not be able to celebrate the Lord’s Supper corporately at this time. Talks are in the works as to how the Sacrament can be distributed to those who need or desire it. More information will come out regarding this at a later date.

Several people have asked about the Lenten skits. We will be completing those once we are able to meet again for worship. Due to the fact that the drama is copyrighted, we will not be able to record it so that you can watch it. Don’t panic, you’ll still get to vote at the end of the skits.

Something that came out of the recent emergency meeting of the circuit pastors that has me very excited has to do with Easter. If this ban on gathering together for worship extends into Holy

Week or beyond, the circuit pastors are planning on “moving” Holy Week to whenever we are allowed to meet again. All the LCMS congregations in the Wausau area would then be celebrating Palm Sunday through Easter at the same time. We’re hoping that the shutdown does not last that long, but we are working toward being prepared if it happens.

Regarding funerals and other non-regular services: All funerals, memorial services, and weddings will adhere to the mandate of having less than ten people in attendance. This means that several services are being postponed until after the restrictions are lifted. The ones that are happening will be private so as not to exceed the number specified by the governor. The private services will be recorded, and a video will be provided to the families so that they can share the service with others.

One concern of a few of the brothers at the meeting of the circuit pastors has to do with finances. During this time period please remember that the church has financial obligations that need to be met – mortgage payments, utility bills, salaries, etc. CLC has a “rainy day fund” established for emergencies such as this, but the “money well” is not bottomless. Donations can still be mailed to the church.

Most importantly, remember the elderly and those who may end up being quarantined in the coming days. If you know someone who cannot, or should not, go out in public and may need assistance in getting groceries or completing other public tasks, consider offering to help. Even a phone call to make sure that they are safe and healthy, or just to break the boredom of being cooped up at home is a very kind and loving thing to do.

There is more that I could write, but this is long enough for now. Continue to pray for the rapid dissipation of this virus; for life in our nation and in the church to get back to normal; and for your fellow believers and those who have been called to serve them, that we all would stay healthy, have strength, would put our trust in the Lord and in Him alone, and will serve the Lord with gladness even at a time like this. This is our opportunity to show the world what it means to be a follower of our living Lord, who died and rose to bring healing to our souls.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Dave Wetmore