



*Immanuel Lutheran Church LC-MS*  
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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ at Immanuel Lutheran Church,

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

As I sit down to write this letter to you, I can't help but pray the words of Psalm 28:

<sup>1</sup>*To you, O Lord, I call;  
my rock, be not deaf to me,  
lest, if you be silent to me,  
I become like those who go down to the pit.*

<sup>2</sup>*Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy,  
when I cry to you for help,  
when I lift up my hands  
toward your most holy sanctuary.*

<sup>3</sup>*Do not drag me off with the wicked,  
with the workers of evil,  
who speak peace with their neighbors  
while evil is in their hearts.*

<sup>4</sup>*Give to them according to their work  
and according to the evil of their deeds;  
give to them according to the work of their hands;*

*render them their due reward.*

<sup>5</sup>*Because they do not regard the works of the Lord  
or the work of his hands,  
he will tear them down and build them up no more.*

<sup>6</sup>*Blessed be the Lord!  
For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.*

<sup>7</sup>*The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;  
my heart exults,  
and with my song I give thanks to him.*

<sup>8</sup>*The Lord is the strength of his people;  
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.*

<sup>9</sup>*Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!  
Be their shepherd and carry them forever.*

The Lord hears His people's pleas for mercy. In Him we trust, and with our songs we give Him thanks. He is our strength, and our shepherd who carries us forever.

You may have already heard about the Governor's latest proclamation issued on Monday, April 27, 2020. If you have not, here is the portion regarding worship services:

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## MASS GATHERINGS

**SECTION SIX.** Pursuant to Iowa Code § 135.144 (3), and in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Public Health, unless otherwise modified by subsequent proclamation or order of the Iowa Department of Public Health, social, community, recreational, leisure, and sporting gatherings and events of more than 10 people shall continue to be prohibited at all locations and venues, including but not limited to parades, festivals, conventions, and fundraisers effective 12:01 a.m. on May 1, 2020 and until 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2020.

A. Spiritual and religious gatherings are not prohibited by this section, but a church, synagogue, or other host of a spiritual or religious gathering shall implement reasonable measures under the circumstances of each gathering to ensure social distancing of employees, volunteers, and other participants, increased hygiene practices, and other public health measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 consistent with guidance issued by the Iowa Department of Public Health. Although wedding and funeral ceremonies are not covered by this section, wedding receptions of more than 10 people are social gatherings that are prohibited.

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**What does this mean for Immanuel? It means we will be resuming services on Sunday, May 3 at 9:00, and Thursday Bible Study, May 7, at 11:00.**

We are able to have services, as long we still continue the practices of social distancing and good

hygiene practices. For the time being, the activities at church will proceed as follows:

- WE WILL HAVE
  - Divine Service at 9:00
  - Thursday Bible Study at 11:00
  - A Matins service and the sermon will still be recorded, emailed/mailed out, and found on the website
- WE WILL NOT HAVE
  - Coffee and treats after service
  - Sunday School
  - Sunday morning Bible Study
  - Quarterly Voter's Meeting (we will wait until the summer)

In order to maintain social distancing practices and good hygiene, we will also be implementing the following changes:

1. We will prop the doors open to limit the touching of door handles.
2. When sitting in the sanctuary, please keep a six feet distance from those not in your immediate families. The fellowship hall may also be used during the service.
3. No shaking hands
4. Will not be having ushers.
5. The offering plate will be left on a table in the back.
6. Bulletins will be left on table for people to pick up.
7. To limit exposure for communion, a few added measures will be in place
  - a. Pastor will be administering both elements by himself.
  - b. As there is no ushers, each family desiring communion is asked to come up on their own, while maintaining social distancing practices.
  - c. In Christian freedom, both individual and common cup will be offered. The common cup will be cleansed after each family. The individual cups will be spaced apart within the tray to allow for individuals to grab a cup without touching another cup.
  - d. After each table is served, an elder will sanitize the altar rail.

We know there is still much fear, and opening services is not meant to burden anyone's conscience. We are offering the opportunity for those who desire to come and receive the Word and Sacrament. If you are not feeling well, or are just not quite comfortable yet with gathering together, the service of Matins with the sermon will still be recorded and sent.

If you are desiring the Lord's Supper, and want to limit exposure, please contact pastor to arrange a private time.

Also, if you desire to wear a mask during the worship services, please don't hesitate to do so. If you have questions or concerns, please let pastor or one of the elders know.

I end this letter with a prayer for you as your pastor:

*Glory and honor, praise and thanks be to You, God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for all the mercy and faithfulness You have shown to Immanuel Lutheran Church, Grinnell. Your Word has not returned to You void, but You have here gathered a people that knows You and fears Your name. Give me Your Holy Spirit that I may at all times see the good things in this congregation and praise and thank You for them. Bless Your Word in times to come that it may preserve the faithful in Your grace, convert those who do not yet belong to You, and bring back the erring and straying. Gather Your people as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and shelter Your congregation with Your love; for You live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Joel G. Koepf

Board of Elders: Joel McDonough, Steve Haase, Darlo Kelting, Ken Mergen