

Gloria Dei

LUTHERAN CHURCH

April 3, 2020

Being Church in the Midst of a Pandemic

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

John 14:27

Dear members and friends of Gloria Dei,

We trust that this letter will find you and your families staying well and safe as our world enters its fourth week of coping with the coronavirus pandemic. It is hard to digest the speed at which the normal rhythm and habits of our lives have been upended in the two weeks since we last were able to worship together on Lent 4.

Our common life as a Christian community—probably for some months to come—rather than be characterized by attendance at church on Sunday, is going to be characterized by the prayer, meditation on God’s Word and the loving care we express for each other on a daily basis.

This is uncharted territory for all of us, and there is no instruction manual on how to be church in conditions of enforced distancing from one another and the suspension of community gatherings and worship. The leaders and pastors, music ministers, and rank and file members of each congregation are exploring, learning and offering new ways we can maintain a sense of connection with one another and provide materials and resources for home worship. The possibilities are endless, but the adoption of this or that new technology or reliance on more traditional forms of communication is dependent on the circumstances, gifts, and resources within each congregation. What works well or is possible in one place, may not work well in another, and calls for creativity and wisdom. The people of God, not unlike the wise scribes in Jesus’ parable, who have been trained to build-up the kingdom of God, have had to bring out of their treasures what is new and what is old. (Matt: 13:52)

We want to convey to you the different ways we are reaching for continuity in pastoral care, worship and conducting the business of the church. Maureen J., Pat O., Sue E., and Pastor Vida have initiated weekly calls to everyone in our church directory. If you haven’t received at least one call or text message in the last 10 days, please let us know. Pastor Vida is initiating “Office Hours by Phone,” Tuesdays, 10:30am -12:30pm and Wednesdays, 7:00pm-9:00pm. Last Sunday’s bulletin was enriched with recordings of hymns and songs by Sonja K. We hope to continue with this. Pastor Vida has provided copies of her sermons. For this coming Passion Sunday, we have included a recording of the Passion Narrative with lectors from our own congregation. If you have been a lector and are curious or enthused to try out a new medium, please give Shelley a call and let her know. We would like to incorporate recordings of the lections in the coming weeks. In addition, your Church Council and Worship Committees have held virtual meetings with the help of digital technology. The Sunday School children have also “gotten in on the act” and had their first virtual meetup last Sunday. There were giggles and moments of shyness triggered by seeing themselves and one another on a screen, but they had fun and are planning to meetup again this Sunday. Lastly, Gloria Dei has participated in virtual meetings for both lay leaders and pastors hosted by the Synod, for mutual support and sharing of information.

Some of you have been wondering about the financial impact on the church. We are happy to report to you that Synod Council listened carefully to the concerns being expressed by congregational members and pastors regarding the significant financial challenges as a result of loss of income from groups renting church facilities. As a result, Synod Council decided that the funds

received from the recent sale of two synod-owned properties should be accessed to assist congregations during this extraordinary time. The decision was made for every congregation to receive a \$10,000 grant. We are grateful for the generosity you have demonstrated in these days. We anticipate that your financial commitment will remain quite strong in the months ahead. Further details on how you can continue to support the church will be outlined in an upcoming letter from Kathleen Stoll, our Treasurer.

If there is any concern, creative idea or suggestion you want to share on how to be church while apart, your Council is available and ready to receive them. Please call any of the Council members listed below

In closing, we want to again to encourage you – We will get through this crisis, as a community, together. Right now, it may feel like we are in a disorienting twilight zone between the Before and After. But nevertheless, if we all look around, we will have the opportunity to offer and receive love and compassion. And as we immerse ourselves to be fully present to the Spirit and each other, our anxieties will melt away, and before we know it, we will find ourselves standing on the other side of this pandemic, with better health practices, better relationships, clearer priorities, and deeper faith.

Yours in Christ,



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