

These past weeks and months we have seen an incredible series of events related to the global outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. As the virus spreads, governments and health organizations have been taking unprecedented actions. Each day brings some news about how this situation is rapidly evolving. It can be difficult to keep up with it.

This past week, the national bishop of the ELCIC and the five synodical bishops have written several letters with advise about how to proceed in this matter. Their latest letter came yesterday and is attached to this email. In it they say:

With the information we have today, we feel it is both prudent and responsible that our congregations suspend all public worship services and other gatherings effective immediately. Some of you have already made this decision. It is our hope that we will all be strongly encouraged to do likewise.

The Church Council of Faith Lutheran Church has decided to follow this advice. **Effective immediately, all public worship and congregational events have been suspended until further notice.** The Evangelical Slavic Church (CEFC) that meets in our church will do the same. All other user groups have suspended their activities for the time being.

This means that we will not be gathering for worship this Sunday or for the next while. We cannot say for certain how long this will last but likely it will be a minimum of 4 weeks. It is a regrettable decision but one that is made with the health and well-being of all in mind. This is the right thing to do at this time. We will be continuously evaluating as circumstances change and new information comes available. You will be advised of any further decisions made.

This is a unique challenge to the way in which we continue to be church and neighbour to one another. We will need to rely much more on the use of technology to connect us – phone calls, emails, Facebook, etc. We are exploring ways in which we can be a part of a weekly worship experience. That might include things such as streaming videos on YouTube or Facebook Live or a recorded service with a link posted to our website. Several churches already have been doing this and I may be able to get that information to you.

In the meantime, I will continue to be available to you as much as I can. My plan is to keep regular office hours, **Monday to Friday, approximately 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.** Feel free to call me any time. If I do not answer, please leave a message and I will return your call ASAP. I am also available in the evenings by appointment. If you need to talk, if you have any comments or suggestions, if you have any information that I need to know or if you just want to check in, please do not hesitate to call. And feel free to call one another, I encourage you to connect with your friends and family as much as possible. Social distancing should not lead to social isolation.

If you find that you are unable to do some of the things that you need to do – pick up groceries, pick up prescriptions, go to an appointment, etc. – please call me and I will find someone who is able to help out. If you are one of those people who is willing to help in this way, please let me know and I will add you to my list.

This new territory for all of us. Never in a generation or two has our world faced such a situation. Your patience, your understanding and your prayers are appreciated. My hope is that this will be short-lived and we will all be able to enjoy one another's company again very soon. Please take care, stay healthy, stay in touch...and wash your hands frequently.

On a positive note, we have water once again! Many of you know that 2 weeks ago, a water line burst and was leaking into the basement. We caught it early and damage was minimal. We were using water from our neighbour who graciously allowed us to connect to their outside tap. But now the line has been replaced and upgraded and we are back to normal. Hooray!

God be with you all.

Rev. Brian Krushel, Pastor