



Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 3257
750 Seneca Lane
(307) 733-4382

March 14, 2020

Dear congregation,

Just after pushing "send" on my communication with you regarding COVID-19, new recommendations on how we can best participate in "flattening the curve" here in Teton County came out (see attached letter from Bishop Kristen Kuempel). I consulted with colleagues this morning, and Shepherd of the Mountains will be suspending in-person worship tomorrow (March 15) and into the coming weeks. This means that our Lenten soup suppers and evening prayer will also not be offered. We hope to resume services in April.

Worshipping together in Spirit:

On Sunday, I will send out the readings for the day, an audio recording of my sermon, a link to a hymn for reflection, and the prayers. If you would prefer to experience a live-stream worship, this is a great chance to experience the wider ELCA. For instance, Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls has a strong reputation in live-streamed worship. Check out <https://oslchurch.com>

Practicing social distancing:

In addition, I will not be holding the Tuesday morning Bible & Breakfast class, or my normal open coffee hours on Wednesday. Feel free to call the church or reach out by email.

Exceptions:

The church will continue to welcome our small AA groups and follow their leadership's decisions.

On Thursday, March 19th, we will host an appointment-only blood drive from 1 - 5:30 pm. Blood drives are not mass gatherings, and serve an important function in avoiding a critical failure in the blood supply available to hospitals. Learn more from our Vitalant

partner here: <https://www.vitalant.org/Articles/New-28-day-Deferral-In-Response-to-Novel-Coronavir.aspx>

A colleague shared this wisdom from Martin Luther, who faced the Black Plague:

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."

- The Annotated Luther, Volume 4: Pastoral Writings, page 404.

For a time, being at the church building together is cancelled. Being the church is not! We are still Shepherd of the Mountains. Keep praying, keep forgiving, keep giving, keep singing, keep loving.

In Christ,
Pastor Inger