

March 18, 2020 Important message for St. Peters Congregation regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus):

The temporary plan at this point, given the CDC recommendation, is to stop all services and group meetings for 8 weeks. That does mean no Lenten services and no Sunday Services from March 18 to May 17, 2020. It also means no Easter Services as well. This change is temporary and can be changed if the threat of transmission is reduced and it is safe for group gatherings. We understand that this may be received as confusing or even upsetting, so we want to provide some clarity regarding this decision.

Why? The goal is to reduce the transmission of the virus. The reason for social distancing, of which this is one measure, is to reduce the increase in cases so as to not overwhelm the health care system with illness caused by Covid-19. For instance, hospitals only have access to a limited number of ventilators. Too many patients at once will mean choices about who receives the care and thus who lives and who dies due to limited resources. The overwhelming demand for hospital beds especially intensive care beds has already been taking place in other parts of the world.

This is not the flu and for those over age 60 especially with preexisting conditions, it can have serious and even fatal outcomes. This is the reason for the major closures of business, entertainment, sporting events, schools, and church events that have already taken place across the country. Eight weeks may seem like a long and unreasonable time for a reduction in church services. Given the characteristics of this virus in the community as seen in other countries, it is not unreasonable at all. If social distancing works, it has to be done early while most of the population is healthy and virus free. With the limited testing at this point, health officials just do not know how extensive the spread of this disease is but from what we know it is most likely to dramatically increase in positive cases and deaths. Now is the time to do this and not later when the majority of the population is now sickened with the virus. It is estimated that the peak viral activity is predicted to be from late April to early May.

The stopping of services and meetings for 8 weeks is an act of love in Christ. We love the nurses and doctors in our hospitals, and so we choose not to gather so we do not contribute to an overwhelming influx of patients. We love the vulnerable in our community by reducing the speed that this virus may spread with.

What does this mean to St. Peter's congregation?

Most importantly, this means the ministry continues to all members of the congregation. The pastor and deacons will be working together to see this through. Caring for the congregation goes beyond more than just having Sunday Services. We are called to live in love with one another no matter the circumstances. Many of our lives have already changed from normal and these changes do present challenges as to how all of us express our baptismal promise in Christ.

Pastor Weber will be sending out a letter to all in the congregation. It will more fully explain the

information in this note. Feel free to let other members who are not on Facebook know about these changes. Again, we understand that some may or may not agree with this decision and some may have questions about all of this. Please call Pastor Weber or myself if you have any questions or concerns. Please look at the CDC website or Facebook site, MN Department of Health and various local TV stations have sections on Covid-19 update. As I was writing this, the recommendation had been for groups of 250 and now they are speaking of groups of 10. The president also stated this could go on until late July and early August. This situation is quickly and daily changing.

David Cheesebrow, Head Deacon