



St. Paul Lutheran Church

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A Letter From Pastor Tim W Muehlbrad On Dealing With the Coronavirus

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I want to start this message with several quotes:

We must pray against every form of evil and guard against it to the best of our ability in order not to act contrary to God. p125

Therefore 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 infect 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. p132

Moreover, he who has contracted the disease and recovered should keep away from others and not admit them into his presence unless it be necessary. Though one should aid him in his time of need, as previously pointed out, he in turn should, after his recovery, so act toward others that no one becomes unnecessarily endangered on his account and so cause another's death. "Whoever loves danger," says the wise man, "will perish by it" [Ecclus. 3:26]. p132

Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 43: Devotional Writings II*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, translated by Carl J. Schindler, vol. 43 (Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 113–38. *Whether One May Flee From A Deadly Plague*

If you read the small print in the footnote you noticed it was written several hundred years ago by Martin Luther in an open Letter called, "*Whether One May Flee From A Deadly Plague*". The Bubonic Plague hit Europe in the mid 1300's with other outbreaks in the 15th and 16th centuries. Although people of that time did not understand

scientifically how the disease was spread, I believe the advice and faith of Martin Luther still holds true today as it applies to us in our situation.

Whether you think this whole thing is blown out of proportion or not does not matter, we need to heed the recommendations and mandates of the authorities and avoid contact with one another that is not essential. We need to slow the spread of this disease so it does not overwhelm our healthcare system. The government cannot close down the church because we are protected by the First Amendment, but we still need to comply with the recommendations and mandates for the safety of our community.

Therefore, we have made drastic changes to the way we are carrying out our mission to be followers of Christ. At this time (and I expect more changes to be made to this plan as the situation changes) this is how we will handle our ministry:

Meetings

All meetings over 10 people cannot be held in person, and it may be best if smaller groups do not meet in person as well. Use email, phone, and various forms of internet platforms (Facebook, Skipe, Zoom, Go-to-meeting, etc.) to conduct meetings and announcements.

Sunday School and Youth Activities

All are cancelled at this time until we come up with creative ways to continue.

Church Office

The office will be open to handle phone calls, mail, emails, other correspondence, finances, and all the other things with which we normally deal, but we, too, want to limit person to person contact as much as possible. Most business can be handled over the phone or email and a drop box is available in the door next to the office door. Devotional Materials, bulletins, announcements, etc. will be available on the table or bulletin board at the Education Building entranceway. Please call ahead of time if you need person to person contact.

Pastor

I will be limiting my visits. Nursing Homes and Hospitals are on lockdown and I do not want to take unnecessary risk in spreading disease to people's homes. I am still available and willing to make visits or have you come into the office when you need me.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

Baptisms will still be done in worship, if possible, but the number of family members will to be limited to 10. Weddings, also, can be done, but those in attendance will be limited to 10 and at a later date we can do a larger celebration. Funerals will be graveside only, and at a later date we can do a memorial service.

Fellowship Hall Rentals

All rentals are suspended at this time and if they are cancelled because of Coronavirus, all money will be refunded.

Day Care

The Day Care will remain open unless they are mandated to close by the governing agencies. The Learning Garden is considered essential so parents can go to work. All safety precautions have been put into place as they have been issued.

New Ministry – Groceries

Nicholas is volunteering to pick up groceries for people so they do not expose themselves or others to infection. He will need help as more people ask him to go shopping on their behalf. For more information, contact Nicholas or see his posting on the Church Facebook page. And, new ministries may start as we see the need or as people bring in creative ideas.

Worship

Worship is the center of life of the congregation and this is where, as a congregation we will feel the changes the most. All Lenten Services are cancelled and so is the Saturday Evening Worship Service. In normal times Worship is the time where we come together to give thanks and praise to God, we come to support one another, and yes this too is important – to socialize. We are not in normal times and so we need to think about worship differently. We are very blessed and have an opportunity that many other congregations do not have – we have a radio ministry and do livestream audio. We plan to make use of that blessing. I encourage you to stay home unless you have a specific part in the worship service. At this time the doors will not be locked, but if large crowds are congregating, we may have to make new considerations. Also, I am in conversation with other NALC pastors and the pastors of Yorktown and we are giving each other new and creative (crazy?) ideas and ways of doing worship. Our Sunday service at 9:00 AM is broadcast at 100.1 FM, or you can listen to the livestream on the internet. The easiest way to get to the livestream is on our church website: www.stpaulykt.org and click on the link: Shoutcast Audio Stream at the bottom of the page.

Communication

Please check for changes to the schedule on our Facebook page (St. Paul Lutheran Church Yorktown, Tx), our website: www.stpaulykt.org, or call the office (361-564-2135) or Pastor (512-922-6217).

This is difficult for all of us. We were created to be social creatures. If we work together and heed the mandates, by God's help we will make it through this. And I would like to leave you with this quote by NALC Bishop Dan Selbo:

I have a long list of concerns related to the coronavirus. I am concerned for the elderly who are the most at risk. I am concerned for the disenfranchised and for those on the streets who have no one and nowhere to turn. I am concerned for the loss of reason that seems to have overtaken so many in their own personal response to what is truly a communal concern. I am concerned that people are stockpiling supplies they do not need, so much so that those who do need them are not able to find them. I am concerned for our hospitals and our clinics and for the doctors and nurses and overcrowded emergency rooms that are all being stretched. I am concerned for our economy and for those whose lives will be impacted by the loss of jobs. I am concerned for a long list of things, for these and many more, but I am not afraid...neither should we, as a Church, be afraid.

Rather than live in fear, let us together approach this challenge in faith. We have an opportunity to model for our children and for families and for each other what a faith-filled and faithful response can be. Instead of living in panic and in fear, being reactionary and taking a self-centered response, we have a chance to remain rational and reasoned and to approach this pandemic in a spirit of trust.

What I fear, more than COVID-19, is that we will forget who we are and to whom we belong. As a church, we need to take preventive measures and commit ourselves to prayer. We need to rely on the health professionals for advice and entrust our lives to Christ. We need to take full advantage of the resources we have been given and follow the best-practices of those who can give helpful and health-giving advice. And then we need to step back and stay centered and remember and remind each other that we belong to Christ.

Peace,
Pastor Tim W Muehlbrad