

May 5, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am deeply grateful for your prayers and support during this pandemic, and for your patience while we have cancelled services for a time. I am looking forward to the day when we are able to return fully to our life together. For seven weeks we have cancelled all activities and in-person services in order to help protect lives. But the ministry of the Church has not ceased. We have streamed, televised, and broadcast on the radio our services to ensure that the Gospel is still proclaimed. We've offered private communion services for individuals and households and counseled the distressed. We have made many phone calls to check on our members. Answering Christ's call to love our neighbor, we have helped the poor, made masks, and delivered essential supplies like medications to the elderly. We have also continued our loving service to our families, workplaces, and wherever we are called. We have not been inactive as a church, even though we have not been together as we'd like.

Following our Governor's advice and Christ's command, we are going to begin offering the weekly Divine Service again. Christ's words "Do this" and "often" regarding the Lord's Supper means that He commands that we regularly receive this gift. This, along with our pressing need because of our sins and the temptations of the world and devil, combined with the promise given here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," should cause us to thirst and hunger for this Sacrament more than any ordinary food. We also know, because of the eternal life granted only through the gift of Jesus Christ, that our spiritual need for forgiveness, life, and salvation, are far greater than any bodily need. Christ promised: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." We desire Christ's Word and Sacraments more than anything this world and life can give us. Therefore, we cannot remain closed, since, although we've offered communion upon appointment, far too many are missing the opportunity to receive this gift.

In addition, the writer of Hebrews says, "Let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25). The Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:18b-20a). And from the beginning of the Christians church worship was marked by the gathering of Christians devoted to the teaching of the Apostles and the Sacraments (Acts 2:42). These things cannot be fulfilled with one-directional, online or televised services.

We are following strict procedures so that we may celebrate the Sacrament while still preventing the spread of coronavirus to the best of our ability. Please see our new procedures updated 5-5-2020. As I said in a recent sermon, no one can guarantee 100% safety anywhere. Life always involves risk, especially when it comes to the kingdom of Christ. But we trust our Great Physician of body and soul, whose mercy overflows, to watch over us in all things.

That being said, it does not indicate a lack of faith should a person, in honoring God's gift of the body and out of concern for their neighbor's health, decide to stay home for a while longer, especially those who are much more vulnerable to this disease. There are some who should still remain home. They can still watch our services and request to receive communion privately. I leave that to your discretion.

May God fill you with His grace and supply your needs in Jesus Christ! Peace be with you!
Please call me if you have any needs or concerns.

In Christ,

Pastor Solum