



St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church, LCMS

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Rev. Leonard E. Tanksley, Pastor

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To the Saints of Christ at St. Peter Lutheran Church,

These last months have no doubt been very challenging for you. Things have not been the same. School looks different, church has been different, the whole world is different. Due to COVID-19 people have missed out on things in their lives, graduations, confirmation parties, weddings, and in some cases even their loved ones funeral.

With all of that in mind, in accordance with Executive Order 20-26, we will begin services on Sunday 10 May 2020. Paragraph 14 of Executive Order 20-26 states:

14. Religious Entities and Places of Worship

- A. **Virtual Services Preferred:** Places of worship and faith communities are encouraged to continue livestream services or otherwise provide virtual services to safely serve their communities, or alternatively, conduct drive-in services
- B. In either Stage 1 or 2: On or after May 8, 2020, religious services, including wedding ceremonies and funeral services, may continue and will no longer be subject to the limits on social gatherings. However, social distancing and other sanitation measures outlined in ¶ 6 will continue to apply. Wedding receptions and visitations before or after funerals remain subject to the limitations and restrictions for social gatherings (¶ 15).

It is a blessing to be able to worship together again. But with that in mind, things will be different, at least temporarily. First and foremost, we offer no judgement on our brothers and sisters in Christ for their decisions regarding this pandemic. We all have opinions about the Coronavirus, but our opinions are not necessarily the same as our brothers or sisters in Christ. We have a duty to love our neighbor. I invite you to keep this in mind as this letter continues as many things outlined will be done with an overabundance of caution.

St. Peter will still be offering services via YouTube. This is being done in order to allow those who wish to continue remaining at home and also for our most vulnerable population. Services that are recorded will continue to be Matins. Most of the hymns will be the same as Sunday, as will the sermon. As of right now, we do not have the ability to “livestream” our services, therefore, it is recorded ahead of time and published to the web. The services can be found via YouTube, Facebook, and the church website. Also, on the church website, the bulletin is available for the recorded service under the “Bulletins” tab.

We will resume worship at St. Peter, Sunday, 10 May 2020. Worship will not be at 9AM, however. We will have **TWO** worship times at 8AM and 10AM. I know this is unusual. This is being done in an effort to help lessen the amount of people per service and make following social distancing guidelines easier. Paragraph 6 of Executive order 20-26 states:

6. Social Distancing and Other Requirements

The phrase “social distancing” includes maintain at least six feet of social distancing from other individuals. The phrase “sanitation requirements” or “sanitation measures” includes washing hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds as frequently as possible or using hand sanitizer, covering coughs and sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands), regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces, and not shaking hands. All businesses and entities must take proactive measures to ensure compliance with the social distancing and sanitation requirements, including, where possible, the following:

- A. **Designate Six-Foot Distances:** Designating with signage, tape or by other means, six feet of spacing for employees, customers, clients or members to maintain appropriate distance.
- B. **Hand Sanitizer and Sanitizing Products:** Having hand sanitizer, and sanitizing products readily available for available for employees and customers.
- C. **Separate Operating Hours for Vulnerable Populations:** Implementing separate operating hours for the elderly and vulnerable customers.
- D. **Online and Remote Access:** Posting online whether a facility is open and how best to reach the facility and to continue services by phone or remotely.

In order to comply with the guidelines several things will be taking place.

- A. You will be ushered to a pew. We will be sitting in every other pew beginning with the front of church and moving backwards alternating between lectern and pulpit side. Once you are in your pew, you are not permitted to move to another pew in an effort to maintain our distance. After church is over, you will be dismissed by pew and are to immediately exit the building.
- B. There is no seating in the choir loft/balcony.
- C. Entrance to the church will only come through the front doors. There is no entrance or exit in the basement. The restrooms in the basement may be used. If someone wishes to sit in the basement for the duration of service, please talk to a deacon.
- D. The entire service is printed in the bulletin. Hymnals will not be available to use.
- E. There will be no communion register

- F. The offering plates will be in the back for you to deposit your tithes into on your way in or out.
- G. Hand sanitizer is available as you enter and exit the building.

As excited as we all are to be able to worship around God's Word AND Sacraments, we still must keep the above things in mind. I am excited to see all of you as well, but we cannot socialize in the narthex. Paragraph 15 of Executive Order 20-26 says:

15. Social Gatherings

All public and private gatherings (outside a single household or living unit or religious service), whether familial, social, governmental, philanthropic or otherwise, are prohibited unless:

- A. In Stage 1, any gathering is limited to ten (10) or fewer people who must also engage in social distancing and other sanitation measures,
- B. In Stage 2, any gathering is limited to twenty-five (25) or fewer people who must also engage in social distancing and other sanitation measures.

Because of these guidelines set forth by Executive Order 20-26, you will need to exit the building in a timely manner. Should you wish to engage in conversations and such, please do so in the parking lot.

In Executive Order 20-26 there is a section which is directed to the High Risk and Vulnerable individuals. It States:

- C. **High Risk and Vulnerable Individuals:** People at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including those 65 and above and those who are sick or have underlying medical issues, are urged to stay in their residence to the extent possible, except as necessary to seek medical care.

Should someone who falls in this category not feel comfortable coming to service on a Sunday, Pastor would be willing to meet with them privately for an individual service. Should you feel comfortable coming to service, you are certainly free to do so. Along these same lines, it is not required that individuals wear masks for worship, however, should you feel more comfortable if you wear a mask, you are certainly free to do so.

St. Peter will be celebrating Holy Communion this Sunday 10 May 2020. This is the second Sunday of the month, but for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have not received the sacrament in the last two months it will be offered. With that being said, several protocols have been set in place in order to adhere to the requirements of Executive Order 20-26.

- A. No chalice will be offered for the time being
- B. Communion will be done in a continuous fashion, rather than being done by table. This means that no one will come up the step to the altar, but rather remain on the main level. Communicants will be dismissed a pew at a time, beginning in the front pew of the lectern side.

- C. The communicant will proceed first to the Pastor where they will receive the host. After receiving the host, they will proceed to the center aisle and receive the individual cup from the seminarian or deacon. The cup may be placed in the basket.
- D. After the last person from the pew has received the host from Pastor, the next pew will be dismissed by the deacon.

I understand that this is not how things have been done in the past. These are not ideal changes, nor are they permanent; however, they have been done in order to provide an overabundance of caution in the way we worship and commune together. These decisions were reached after a very helpful and formative discussion among the elders, deacon, president, organist, and Pastor.

Please be patient with one another, with the council, and with the pastor during these times. We are all trying to navigate through this pestilence. If you have any comments or concerns, Pastor will be happy to address them privately with you. Feel free to text, call, or email.

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Mt. 11.28-30)

Your Humble Servant in Christ,

The Rev. Leonard E. Tanksley