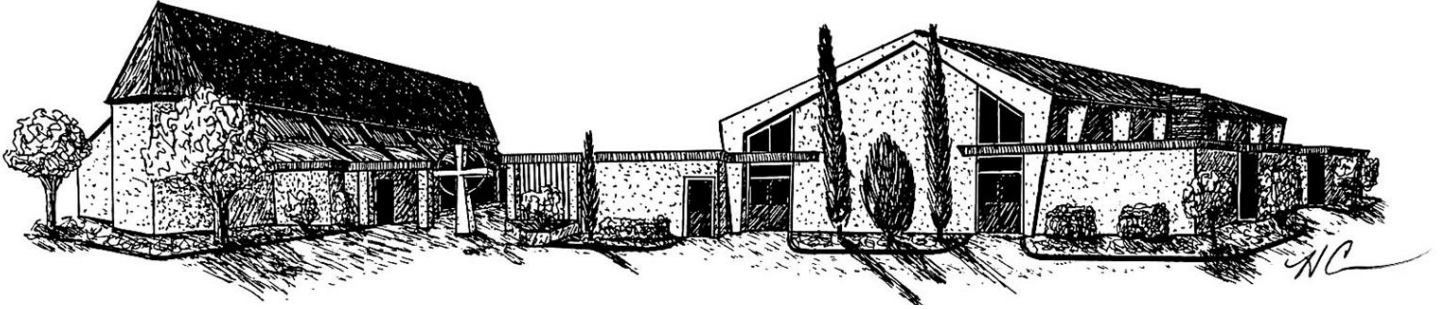


Lutheran Church of Our Savior



April 8, 2020 AD

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in Christ Jesus—Who still reigns. This letter (a form of which previously was sent to the officers, board chairmen, and Elders of LCOS) is to inform you, as members of Lutheran Church of Our Savior, of the current state of congregational life, given the deep impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) upon us.

Spiritual Health—

After several days of increasingly-limiting local restrictions, on March 19 the governor of California issued a statewide “Shelter-in-Place” order for residents of the state of California. The constraints upon ministry have, of course, been very restrictive. Initially, in days prior to the governor’s order, with changes being directed almost by the hour (by the Santa Clara County Department of Health) our challenge was keeping pace with those updates, and recalculating at each turn how (i.e., in what setting and number) we might be able to continue to serve the people of the congregation by way of ‘normal’ Divine services or prayer offices/services. With the governor’s “Shelter-in-Place” mandate (initially to last until April 7), the target ceased moving; it was clear that we wouldn’t be permitted to meet for any sort or size of regular worship. When the target ceased moving, we were also able to identify/establish avenues by which the members of Lutheran Church of Our Savior might continue to be fed—by the Word of our Lord, though presently without the Sacrament of the Altar.

For edification in the faith, ‘services’ (albeit recorded, and online) regularly are being posted to the congregation’s website (in accordance with the congregation’s customary schedule of services; i.e., Sundays, Lenten Midweek Services, etc.). To date, these largely have been recorded by the pastors in their respective homes (from which we’re working), and the audio files have been assembled, ordered, and posted. Additionally, near daily devotions have been offered by the pastors. Pastoral letters have been written and posted to address the present situation, or an aspect of it (e.g., life presently without the Sacrament of the Altar, see Pastoral Letter #2).

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Almost immediately after the very fluid situation congealed with the governor's "Shelter-in-Place" order, easy-to-find and to-access features were added to the LCOS website. These are intended to help parishioners and guests access those things mentioned above (i.e., online 'services,' devotions, pastoral letters and notices). We want to thank Dan Delaney, who has been regularly and tremendously helpful and instrumental in posting everything appearing daily on the LCOS website. Julie Fleming also has been very helpful in recording organ tracks via digital recording equipment for use in the online 'services.'

Our prayerful desire and exhortation is that the members of the congregation at this time would make regular use of and be fed by the Word of God, and would even return regularly to the LCOS website as one would return regularly to church to be fed.

Working with Alyssa Delaney, Coordinator of Children's Education (CCE; grades Pk-5), and with Mark Balgeman (Chairman of the Board of Education), a Sunday School online program was developed. Sunday School (for grades 2-5) has met for the past several Sundays, at 9:30 a.m., using Zoom, an online meeting program. Attendance has been full, or near full (i.e., in relation to the number of children who typically have attended Sunday School in person).

Pastor Debner has developed a plan for the continued catechesis/instruction of the present Catechism students.

Due to the strict regulations of the "Shelter-in-Place" order, the pastors currently aren't at liberty to visit the homebound, convalescing, or hospitalized; to make member household visits; to hold our customary (i.e., on-site) Christian education classes; to conduct services (except by way of recording or live-streaming them); or to administer the Lord's Supper. If members should require pastoral care, they are encouraged and advised to contact the pastors by way of their home or cell phone numbers.

The pastors, with the help of Larry Ristow (Chairman of the Board of Elders), have been calling regularly members of the congregation to see how member-households are faring and to encourage them.

Bodily Health—

The Lord cares for His people in soul and in body. So, then, do we. Soon after the "Shelter-in-Place" order took effect, an organized effort was undertaken (directed by the pastors and facilitated by Heidi Carlson and others) to call—using the recently published supplemental directory—the members of Lutheran Church of Our Savior to (1) find out if the member(s) had access to the congregation's website, and if so, then commend the regular use of it for edification and to find updates, but if not, then record the member(s) as one/those who couldn't be served by that form of communication; (2) solicit the most current e-mail address for purposes of our communication with the member(s); and (3) find out whether the member(s) would be in need of assistance obtaining groceries and supplies. We thank the members who agreed to assist in calling.

Larry Ristow, as Chairman of the Board of Elders, was tasked by the pastors with the responsibility of seeing that any such individuals in need of groceries and supplies are being assisted. Several members have volunteered to assist in obtaining groceries and supplies for such members, as needed. We thank them for their willingness. On behalf of the pastors, Pastor Debner is working with Larry Ristow to oversee that such bodily needs are being met.

We encourage all members to seek to assist fellow members and neighbors with their respective needs, as each has ability (cf. Matt 25:40; Luke 10:37).

Offerings—

Our anticipation was and is that because congregants aren't assembling regularly for worship due to the "Shelter-in-Place" order, offerings will be received in reduced amount. In consultation with Larry Ristow (Chairman of the Board of Elders), decision was made to make online giving available by way of the LCOS website. Larry Ristow drafted a letter (posted to the LCOS website in the "Pastoral Letters and Notices" section) informing the members of the congregation of the present situation, and explaining the various methods by which members presently could mail or electronically give offerings.

Conclusion—

This report serves to inform you of the present state of the congregational life of Lutheran Church of Our Savior. There remains daily much to do in caring for the needs of the members of LCOS, in soul and in body. In these trying but God-ordained days, our Lord grant us faith in Him and love for one another. Our Lord keep us in His care.

*In His Service,
Pastor John Bestul*

Wednesday of Holy Week, 2020