



Faith Lutheran Church

GRACE - GIFTED

FAITH - LIFTED

Called to share, seek and serve CHRIST.

Rev. Dr. Carrie Lewis La Plante

Rev. Heather Geest

March 17, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

As the information surrounding the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to change, the Congregation Council and I seek to make decisions to fulfill God's call to care for our neighbors. In these days, that means making decisions that will keep all of us safe and healthy and to help flatten the curve as this virus continues to spread.

With new recommendations from the CDC and the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Congregation Council decided on Monday morning that we are suspending all in-person gathering for a period of 8 weeks or until the recommendations change. This suspension includes all worship services, Sunday School, Confirmation, choirs, meetings and all meetings of outside organizations. This does not include the North Scott Food Pantry which is seeking to serve the community with food during this crisis. For more information on what the Food Pantry is doing, please call their direct number at 563-285-8444. Also, Pastor Carrie and Pastor Heather have suspended all visitation except in cases of emergency, so all contact will be made by phone from this time. If there is an emergency situation that needs pastoral care, please contact the office and the pastors will be happy to make arrangements with you.

We want to be clear that this is a completely preventative measure as there are still no known cases of COVID-19 in the area; however, as people of God who are called to care for all of God's people, especially the most vulnerable, we believe that this is the most responsible and loving decision that we can make at this time.

We assure you that while we are unable to meet in person in these days, we will find ways to still be socially connected. We plan to livestream Holden Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm and weekend worship on Saturday evenings at 5:00 pm on Facebook Live. These services will then be available to watch on Facebook and on our website following worship for you to watch at your convenience. These services will probably look a little different than we are used to, but we will try to keep them as "normal" as we can.

This also means that we will likely not be gathering for worship in person during Holy Week, on Easter Sunday, or on Confirmation Sunday. We will celebrate the full compliment of Holy Week worship and Easter Sunday online, and we will make our first Sunday together a full celebration of Easter. I will work to reschedule the Confirmation service once I am sure we will be worshipping in person again.

We will also be working to provide opportunities for learning and faith formation during this time. We will find ways to offer materials for parents to use at home with their children in lieu of Sunday School. Pastor Carrie is working on how to best complete the Confirmation year while apart and how to have Youth Group opportunities when we cannot meet in person, and she will send further communication to those youth when she has that figured out.

The office will remain open from 8:00 to noon on Monday through Friday to answer calls and keep the administration of the church functioning, so feel free to call us with questions. The North Scott Food Pantry is

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working on how they can best serve the community in these days.

Unfortunately, there are worship opportunities that we will not be able to do as we would normally do in these days. We will not be having communion during this time; however, if you would like to receive the sacrament, you may contact one of the pastors, and we can set up a time to meet you at church for communion, provided you are feeling well. We will not be able to do baptisms during this time, so we will work with those families to reschedule those baptisms. Should the need arise, we will be doing funerals differently as well. We will be available to do small graveside services now, and then will help to schedule visitation and memorial services after it is deemed safe to hold these larger gatherings. While none of this is ideal, we are making our best effort to protect everyone.

We would also ask that you not forget the church financially in these days. We still have ministry to do, staff to pay, expenses to be met, and your giving makes all of that possible. There will be some new ways to give coming in the days ahead, but know that you can always mail your offering or drop it off to the office during office hours, if you feel well.

More will be posted in the days ahead both on Facebook and on our website, and we will continue to post changes as they occur. If you have ideas about how we can be the church and look out for one another and our neighbors during this time, we encourage you to share those ideas with us. We are working on some things, and we will post those on our Facebook page and website as they come available.

God promises to be with us in the wilderness of this time. Jesus promised to be with us always until the end of time. The Spirit is our advocate and guide even (especially) when we cannot see the road ahead.

These are unprecedented times, and we thank you for continuing to do the work of God's kingdom, watching out for one another, loving one another, supporting one another, perhaps in more creative ways, but always pouring out the love of God to your neighbor.

May I close with this prayer:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessings to you all,



Pastor Carrie L. Lewis La Plante