



When I am afraid, I put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? (Psalm 56:3-4 ESV)

March 31st, 2020

Re: Update and Reminders for Mt. Hope and Trinity Lutheran Churches

Dear Church Members and Friends,

It is my genuine hope and prayer that this letter finds you well. I know that this has been a challenging time for everybody. Please know that even in this time when we are not meeting in-person as a church body, we are still here for each other. Please contact me or the church office at any time with any questions, concerns, or prayer requests. Please reach out to one another by phone or email. We are still the body of Christ, connected by the Holy Spirit, no matter how close or far we are from one another.

I hope that you have been able to find the YouTube services, sermons, and Bible Studies that I have been posting online the past few weeks. It is always critical, now more than ever, that we stay grounded in God's Word. If we cannot meet to hear His Word together, He is gracious to provide us with the means to still hear it "together" in other ways. If someone does not have access to the internet or a computer, we are also communicating with those members via mail. Please do not hesitate to contact the office for assistance getting all our communications.

Yesterday, March 30th, the Elders, President/Chairman, and Properties/Trustees of both Trinity and Mt. Hope "met" (virtually online), in order to discuss our current situation at church and what our future plans are. Obviously, from a national and state perspective, the spread of the virus is continuing and it seems that our efforts to limit that spread during this critical time are becoming even more important. As federal guidelines to limit gatherings have been extended through at least April, and as we expect state guidelines to follow suit, we have decided that we will postpone gathering in-person as a church until May. Of course, this group will be meeting again in April to re-assess that date when more information is available.

One large concern that people have had is regarding communion. I am going to be addressing the topic of communion in a separate letter and video (on YouTube) in the coming days, hopefully this week. What I will say for now is this: the Lord's Supper is of immense value for the strengthening of our faith and the assurance we have as the body of Christ. I am going to be looking into the soonest possible time we can consider safely administering the sacrament for the benefit of our people. However, we will unlikely be able to do so while also

listening to and obeying our governing authorities during this current “Stay Home, Stay Safe” order in Michigan. But, as soon as that situation changes, I will make a plan with our Elders so that we can once again partake of that great gift from God. In the meantime, as Lutherans, we know God’s grace is continually ours in Baptism, and our faith is also sustained through the regularly hearing of His Word.

Another concern we have is that we will be unable to meet during Holy Week and for Easter service. This too, is not only unprecedented during our time, but also extremely difficult even to consider. However, certain circumstances at times require great sacrifices in the short-term, so that we may best serve our Lord and one another in the long-term. While it will be a great sacrifice not to be together for Holy Week and Easter, it will make it even sweeter when we are able to celebrate our Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection when we come back together.

Consider these words from the Apostle Paul: “*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*” (Romans 8:18). Paul reminds us that Christians always live with our minds not only on today, but on our eternal lives. What may afflict us today can be endured, because we know it is temporary, and what truly endures is our eternal life in Christ.

Lastly, here are some additional requests and reminders:

- We are asking *all* members to take a few minutes and email your current contact information to secretary@trinitygaylord.com (Trinity) or mthopelcms@gmail.com (Mt. Hope) or call 989-732-4816 (Trinity) or 989-348-5921 (Mt. Hope). We especially want to verify addresses, phone numbers, including cell phones, and email addresses. What we are finding is that a lot of people’s contact info is outdated or incorrect. ***Even if you think we have the right info, please do so anyway.*** We want to communicate as effectively as possible with everyone during this time.
- *As much and only as you are financially able to,* please continue to give your regular offerings to the church. You may set up automatic payments (call the church office for assistance in doing so) or you may mail your offering to the church. We will be publishing our March financial report soon, so we can better assess how things stand.
- Remember that the church building is closed during the “Stay Home, Stay Safe” executive order, except to those designated as essential for minimum church operations. If you need to come to church for any reason, be sure to call Mike Shields at Mt. Hope or Roger Raschke at Trinity first.

Looking With You to God’s Eternal Glory and Blessings in All Things,

Pastor Joe Polzin
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