



*"It's scary to watch everything get cancelled - but these are really signs of hope: people making tough and painful decisions to reduce viral transmission.*

*Right now, love looks like an empty church."*

*-adapted from Rev. Jacqui Lewis, PhD*

*"God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in trouble."*

*Psalm 46*

Friends and members of Saint Andrew,

Over the course of this past week, Pastor Justin, myself, and leaders of our congregation have been monitoring the news regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and discerning our response as a community of faith.

We have been receiving information and guidance from the CDC, Wisconsin Department of Health, Wisconsin Council of Churches, the ELCA Churchwide Office, Bishop Mansholt and the East Central Synod of Wisconsin, pastoral colleagues, and other Central Wisconsin congregations. On Friday, the governor of Wisconsin announced the cancellation of classes with the anticipated reopening date of April 6, which is subject to change pending further information. On Sunday we shared communion and worshiped at the table with precautions, but are quickly learning that is not enough.

**In light of all of this we have made what we believe to be a responsible, but difficult, decision to suspend all congregational worship and all ministry activities through Saturday, April 4, which is also subject to change pending further information.**

This includes bible studies, choirs, Lenten soup suppers and midweek worship, meetings, etc. It has become essential for each community to do their part in eliminating physical connection so as to stand in solidarity with the vulnerable among us and with our human family. We are sacrificing gathering at 150202 County Road NN for a little while so we can

give nurses, doctors, and hospitals a chance to care well for people as more and more are expected to become sick.

In making this decision we are aware that things are rapidly changing and these plans may need to be adapted along the way. We will strive to keep you up to date on any updates to these plans.

Even as our in-person ministry activities are suspended for the rest of the month, Saint Andrew's ministry continues as we strive to care for our neighbors and the vulnerable among us. Our physical separation need not lead to social isolation.

- Pastor Justin and I remain available for pastoral care through email or you can reach us for pastoral emergencies at 715-842-3333.
- In the coming days we will be creating a *compassion team* to reach out to those who may be vulnerable in our community by finding ways to support them in this time of uncertainty: running errands, sharing a meal, babysitting, connecting via phone to extend friendship, etc. Your eyes and ears are critical in identifying these needs. Look for ways to sign up online to give or receive help in a future e-mail.
- No meetings of any size will be held at church. If you find it absolutely necessary to meet as a ministry we would encourage you to do so via teleconference, email, or video conferencing. We are in conversation with outside groups that regularly meet in our building regarding their need for the facility - including AA/Alanon.
- Pastor Justin and I will be live-streaming services of prayer and reflection on Wednesday for the remainder of Lent at 12:15 pm and Sunday mornings at 9 am. You will find these live-streams at [facebook.com/salcwausau](https://www.facebook.com/salcwausau) (even if you do not have a Facebook account, you will be able to access this page). You will also be able to view them at a later time.
- All are encouraged to continue to support the ministry of Saint Andrew by mailing your offering to church or giving online at [www.salc-wausau.org/giving](http://www.salc-wausau.org/giving). You can also give through the "Give Plus" app by Vanco - simply type in the zip code 54401 and look for Saint Andrew Lutheran Church.
- Regular office hours and staffing will be maintained with flexibility considering the health and needs of each staff person. The building will be locked during this season of quarantine and all access to church during business hours may take place by utilizing the door bell at the south door by the bell tower.

Nearly 500 years ago, Martin Luther ministered and taught his people as they lived into the earliest part of the reformation during the Bubonic Plague. Pastor Justin shared an excerpt Sunday morning from a letter Luther wrote called, *On whether Christians can flee from the deadly plague*. He writes,

*"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order to not become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and*

*pollute other and so cause their death as a result of my negligence... if my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely... see this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."*

This unexpected "fast" from church ironically comes as we worship around the theme, "Life in the wilderness." In this season of uncertainty we can be sure of one thing - God goes with us and we need not be afraid.

Your partners in the gospel,

Pastor Jenn Collins  
Lead Pastor

Kerry Fehrman  
Council President

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