



## Sts. Peter and Paul Lutheran Church

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Dennis J. Lauritsen, pastor

The Season of Lent  
March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Our Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“To all God’s beloved... who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:7).

We write to you this evening with heavy hearts to inform you that, after days of prayerful seeking and thoughtful conversation with others, all worship services (both Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings), rehearsals, meetings and activities at Sts. Peter and Paul have been suspended from now through Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> in order to extend our congregation’s efforts to suppress the COVID-19 virus.

As you may know, on Sunday, March 15, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended the cancellation or postponement of all in-person events consisting of 50 people or more throughout the United States (since then, the number has been reduced to 10). On March 12, Bishop Jeffrey Lee suspended all liturgical services in the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, and the following day, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, mandated the same for Chicago’s Archdiocese. Governor J. B. Pritzker has made similar mandates regarding large gatherings as well as Illinois schools and businesses.

The Metropolitan Chicago Synod—ELCA is strongly encouraging all congregations, no matter the size of their attendance, to comply with the recommendations of the CDC by suspending in-person worship while “diligently remaining connected through internet, phone, and other virtual means.”

The immediate need to make this difficult and disappointing decision became apparent this evening at vespers and supper when concerns of our families, loved-ones and friends were communicated regarding our presence at church. Like so many other congregations, the hope had been to modify worship in such ways that would reduce the risks of communicating the virus and permit us to continue to meet. Following the events of this past week and the heightened concerns and measures, this is no longer plausible or responsible to the health and well-being of the most vulnerable among us. This recommendation ultimately rested with the pastoral office of the congregation and needed to be made without further delay.

During this time, we will be monitoring the developments of the suppression efforts and will remain in conversation with the leadership of the congregation and our neighboring congregations, synods and

dioceses. Communication with regard to resuming or continuing suspension of worship services and other meetings, rehearsals and activities will be posted to the website of the congregation, communicated via email and/or telephone as well as other virtual means as these become available. In addition, the church office will remain open during regularly scheduled hours unless you are otherwise notified. Cleaning and sanitation services will also continue as scheduled.

During this time Pastor Dennis and others will be providing worship and prayer resources for your personal and household use. Now let us pray diligently and fervently for our deliverance from this dreadful scourge upon our nation and peoples throughout the world.

*Almighty and merciful God, our peace and our strength, we pray for our nation and the world as we face new uncertainties around coronavirus. Protect the most vulnerable among us, especially all who are currently sick or in isolation. Grant wisdom, patience, and clarity to health care workers, especially as their work caring for others puts them at great risk. Guide us as we consider how best to prepare and respond in our families, congregations, workplaces, and communities. Give us courage to face these days not with fear but with compassion, concern, and acts of service, trusting that you abide with us always. Amen (see also Psalm 91).*

“Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. O Christ, hear us. In mercy hear us. God, the Father in heaven, have mercy on us. God, the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy on us. God, the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us. Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us. Be gracious to us. Spare us, good Lord...” (from The Litany, LBW, pages 168ff).

The peace, light and hope of Jesus’ cross and resurrection be with you all!

Carrie Watkiss, Council President  
Dennis Lauritsen, Pastor