

E-News from St. Paul's

Upholding God's Truth and Proclaiming God's Promises

March 17, 2020

All Public Services, Meetings, and Other Activities at St. Paul's Suspended until March 31.

For the last several days, the Council of Elders has been communicating by email to discuss St. Paul's response to recent guidelines from the CDC regarding public assemblies, Governor Evers' ban on public assemblies larger than 50, and President Trump's recent recommendation for all Americans to avoid as much contact with others as possible over the next fifteen days, including gatherings of more than ten people.

There are two main reasons for any such guidance, bans, or recommendations:

1. To limit the spread of the virus as much as possible, especially among those most at risk of serious illness if they contract the virus; and
2. To "flatten the curve," to slow the spread of the virus enough so that the number of seriously ill patients doesn't overwhelm the health care system's capacity for ICU beds and ventilators, which would put doctors in the awful position of needing to decide who gets those beds and ventilators and who doesn't.

The Council of Elders has unanimously agreed that the best way that we at St. Paul's can help achieve these goals is by suspending all public worship services, meetings, and other activities at St. Paul's until March 31.

This includes the next two midweek Lenten services (March 18 and March 25), including the Lenten meals, the next two Sunday services (March 22 and March 29), all Bible Studies, Sunday School, and Catechism classes, all music rehearsals, winter walking, and all other meetings and activities. The Council of Elders also approved several efforts to use technology to bring our worship services and Bible instruction to as many people as possible.

We are going to try to live-stream all our worship services on Facebook Live. We will soon be contacting the tech team that installed the wireless network in the classroom to ask them to extend that network into the sanctuary so that we can stream video from the church itself. Until that is installed, we will set up the live-stream in Classroom 4. We know that there will probably be some glitches when we first try this for tomorrow's Lenten services, but we will do all we can to make this work as smoothly as possible.

We will also post a link to the worship folders for these services on our website (www.stpaulsbrownsville.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/stpaulsbrownsville). We are already posting a link to the Sunday bulletins on the website.

We realize that there are some members who do not have the technology needed to access the Internet. Most of those people will have family members or friends who will be able to bring the feed to them (please practice the appropriate social distancing when you do). If there's anyone you may be aware of who doesn't have the technology or family/friends to help them out, please contact me. None of these four worship services are scheduled to be Communion services. But if we determine that we need to continue suspending services into April, we will find a way to bring the Sacrament to as many members as possible (perhaps in small groups, again, with all appropriate social distancing).

I have already developed a plan to conduct catechism class by computer and speakerphone. We hope to be able to do something similar with Sunday School and Bible Study, too. We'll get out information about how that might work as soon as any plans get developed.

The Council has also discussed other things we can do to help prevent the spread of the virus once we are able to resume gathering for public worship. We'll announce these things when we make the announcement about resuming services.

We've also had some initial discussions about looking for ways to help anyone in the congregation or community that may experience financial difficulties during this crisis, or to help anyone who may be in the higher category of risk and may need help getting groceries or medication so they don't need to venture out. Please contact me or any of the members of the Council of Elders if you're aware of anyone that could use any of this kind of help.

Finally, please know that we realize that these are worrisome, and perhaps downright scary times for all of us. We hope that these steps we're taking in response to the threat posed by this virus do not make you more scared or worried. We do not see these steps as things we're doing because we're afraid, but rather as things we're doing to show Christ's love to each other, the more vulnerable members of our congregation, as well as others in our community and in our world. At this point in the course of this pandemic, there is probably no greater love that we can show than to do absolutely everything that we can do to prevent the spread of this virus, both to keep it from spreading to the more vulnerable people in society, but also to "flatten the curve" and prevent our health care system from getting overwhelmed.

We pray that the Lord would continue to give us all the health, strength, wisdom, courage, and safety we need to continue to serve him, each other, and our world during these unprecedented times. We pray that he would bless you through the Word of truth we are able to share with his gift of technology while our services are suspended. And we encourage you to remember what Scripture

encourages us to do during anxious times: “Cast all your anxiety on him [God] because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). He really does care for us. The way he watches over us shows us that. The way he sent Jesus as our Savior especially shows us that. The way he continues to give us his Word to strengthen our faith show us that, too.

God be with you all.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bill Carter

P.S. We know that this message will not get to everyone, either because they don't have access to email, or because we don't have their current email address. Please help us get this message to any of those people that you have the ability to share it with. Thank you.