

CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

Pastor Michael Eichstadt, President

April 1, 2020

Dear fellow believers privileged to announce, “He is risen!”

I had a haircut scheduled for last Tuesday. It didn’t happen. By state order the barbershop has been closed for weeks. That is just one tiny drop in a tsunami of plans and events postponed or canceled. The Olympics, MLB, summer festivals, and major construction projects—all have been put on hold. Congregational activities have been affected as well. Holy Week services and our Easter celebration of Christ’s triumph over Satan and death have to be modified for online purposes. Plans carefully organized and mapped out months or years in advance are totally unrealistic now. No life has been left untouched by the fallout from COVID-19.

It shouldn’t really come as a surprise. James writes, “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that’” (James 4:13-15).

It’s unnerving when things don’t go according to plan. I have my comfortable routine of ministry work and leisure activities, and to suddenly have that upended and be told to stay home is stressful. It reminds us of how little control we have over our earthly lives. If so much of the world can be brought to a standstill so quickly by an invisible virus, what long term hope do we have?

But then listen again to James. Our hope is not in our will and plans, but in the Lord’s. “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” What is His will? It is that all be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. He planned it from eternity and in the fullness of time sent His Son to redeem the entire world of sinners. In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, “Father, Your will be done.” “Yet it was the LORD’S will to crush him and cause him to suffer...He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Is. 53:10, 12).

Among the blessings the Lord can provide through our plans falling through is a heightened awareness of our own helplessness in the face of crisis and a renewed appreciation for the Lord’s unfailing promises.

From our human perspective and ability, there is no certainty in what lies ahead. The plans we make today as individuals, congregations, and a church body may need to be revised or even abandoned in the future. While social distancing restrictions prevent many customary fellowship and outreach activities, there are opportunities to think outside the box and try new avenues of ministry. Online services and Bible classes have become a lifeline for many of our members. We

want to remind our fellow believers about the ongoing privilege and need for offerings as an expression of love for the Lord, a fruit of faith, and the means the Lord provides for His work to continue among us. The current situation can be an incentive for congregations to look into more options for giving such as some form of e-giving.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, CLC board and Coordinating Council meetings have been rescheduled for June 8-10, 2020. The CLC Convention has been postponed to July 30-August 2, 2020. We pray that by these later dates it will be possible to travel and meet together in person to carry out the Lord's great commission.

No matter how dire the news, we don't have to withdraw in fear and hopelessness. David wrote, "My times are in your hands" (Ps. 31:15). There are no more loving or capable hands, for they are the same hands which were nailed to the cross in payment for our sin. They are the same hands the risen Lord showed to the disciples Easter night. They are the hands which safely hold all His children close to Him. Lord, Your will be done in us and through us!

In Jesus' name,

Michael Eichstadt,
CLC President

Notes:

Calls for graduates: The Call Committee for Graduates will meet remotely on April 22, 2020. Calls for teaching and pastoral candidates must be submitted to me by April 20, 2020. Although there are two seminary graduates, one has asked not to be considered for a call at this time. There is one graduate from the teaching program.