



Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

St. John – St. James Ev. Lutheran

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Dear Child of God,

Who would have thought that our world would have changed this much in the course of two weeks? The simple answer: God. If we're honest, isn't that what most of us want and need right now? We want the simplicity of God—his power, his wisdom, and his love. All praise to him, for that is what we have. We have the Lord—the never changing God of this ever-changing world. He still loves us with an all-knowing, all-powerful, present everywhere, eternal perspective, 100% faithful and unconditional love. We are still his children, and we know that he continues to work all things for the good of those who love him. As our world is shaken by changes day by day, may we steady ourselves on him and his Word. The Scriptures reassure us of these truths again and again. I'll limit myself to one reference: **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way.... The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."** (Psalm 46:1,2,7) Our confidence and trust is found in him.

It is in that confidence and faith that I write this letter and seek to inform you of some of the plans for our "church life" in the weeks to come. Various governmental bodies have asked that no public meetings of more than 10 people be held. The plans that follow are in response to those official requests and based upon these Biblical principles:

1. *The Fourth and Fifth Commandments apply in a situation like this. We are to obey and respect the governing authorities as they carry out their God-given responsibilities, and we are to do all we can to protect our neighbors and keep them from harm.*
2. *At the same time God certainly desires that Christians gather together regularly for worship.*
3. *In limiting the size of worship gatherings, the government is not attempting to deny our freedom of religion. Rather, government authorities have issued mandates that they believe will protect citizens from harm.*
4. *Since all of these biblical principles are valid, it is legitimate for our congregations to strive to comply with governmental regulations on the one hand and, on the other, to find alternate means to enable God's people to be fed with Word and sacrament.*
5. *Recognize that this is an extraordinary opportunity to let our light shine as congregations and their members look for ways to serve the people in their communities in Christian love.*

We will be suspending our public gatherings of worship, school classes, Bible study and Sunday School, Confirmation classes, and regular face to face meetings. For the safety of our people we are asking that only those on staff use our facilities during this time of extra precaution. We will be seeking alternative means to enable you to feed yourselves and families with the Word. This will undoubtedly be an ongoing process of evaluation and development to discover what best serves our church and school families with the varied resources each household has available.

WORSHIP opportunities:

- **Online:** We will be posting an abbreviated weekly worship service (lessons, sermon, prayers) on the SJSJ Facebook page. (You can request a DVD from the church office. While we explore the feasibility of posting and archiving sermons on our website, those without an account may consider starting a temporary page.) We'll also explore daily Passion History readings and other devotional posts. We chose Facebook for its prevalence among members and the potential for "online fellowship" for encouragement and further resource and update sharing. The SJSJ Facebook page can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/St-John-St-James-Lutheran-School-133904743312183/>
- **Cable Television:** Trinity, Brillion broadcasts their services on local Cable channel 4 (Reedsville) and channel 978 (Brillion) on Monday evenings at 6:30pm.
- **Analog Television:** "Time of Grace" is produced by a WELS group and is televised on WGBA (NBC26) Saturday night, 12:00 am and Sunday morning, 6:30 am. Visit <http://timeofgrace.org> for details and for other daily devotion options.
- **Holy Communion:** For the time being, we will not be offering Lord's Supper. In a short time, your leaders will revisit this issue as God's timing and intentions are more fully revealed regarding the length of these mandates and the extent of the spread of COVID-19. We appreciate your desire to enjoy the blessings of Holy Communion, but we take comfort that in the meantime the Lord promises to strengthen our faith through his Holy Word.
- **FM Radio:** St. John's & Trinity, Kaukauna cooperate to broadcast sermons on 91.9 FM each Sunday morning at 7:30 am.



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DEVOTIONAL/GROWTH opportunities:

- **Bible Study:** I plan to set up our Growing in God's Word Bible study through Google. I'll be directly inviting current members of the class to join our Tuesday night sessions (6:30 pm). If you would like to be a part of the class, I'd be happy to share the information so that many more would be able to join the class. Please email me (contact info is below).
- **WELS:** Our Synod produces some wonderful devotional materials. Many of them are available for subscription without cost to your email address. Visit <http://wels.net> for resources, encouragement, and synod updates. (They also have a WELS app for smartphones.) We also have a publishing house that produces theologically sound materials. If you are looking for additional devotional or study materials, visit <http://nph.net> or call 800-662-6022 for prices and ordering.
- **MLHS Chapel:** Lutheran High will be livestreaming their chapel services Monday through Friday at 10:03 am. Everyone is welcome to be fed by God's Word. Visit <http://mlhslancers.org> and click on "Lancer Vision."
- **More resources:** I will continue to meet with your leaders and ministry teams to evaluate and develop more opportunities for us to grow closer to God and one another. Feel free to share your ideas and other resources.

Many of you have already expressed your concern about the financial stability of our congregation without weekly offerings. That is a legitimate concern. I ask you all to pray about our church's ability to meet our financial obligations. If you are able to support your church's work at this time, please consider making your offerings through direct deposit or through the online bill paying methods which many of you are accustomed to using. Contact the office, if you have questions about those options. Our offering envelopes allow you to mail your offering envelopes if you so choose. You may also drop off your offering envelopes in person using the School entrance (Door "A") during office hours (8am to noon).* We are offering an additional option of Mondays 4-6pm to buy SCRIP and drop off offerings.

*Note: we will be limiting access to the entire facility to the vestibule area of that entrance only. We ask that just staff go beyond those doors in our attempt to limit occupancy in the building to 10 and to minimize the spread of illness. There is a small wooden locked box with a slot to deposit your offerings located in front of the vestibule doors. We will remove offerings at the end of office hours each day.

Your pastor is praying for you and wants to be able to serve you. If you have special spiritual needs during this time, please contact me. I'm happy to discuss your needs and provide care as needed. The office phone numbers are listed above. My cell phone number is 920-277-0101. I'm listing my email address below along with our staff so that you may contact us with questions and concerns. I'm grateful for those with whom I have been able to partner during this challenging time—thank you to our dedicated and caring staff, to your wise leaders, and to our many supportive and devoted members. It is clear you all love your Lord, your church, and your brothers and sisters in Christ. May we all continue to strive together, united in seeking his comfort and guidance and committed to supporting each other in our trust of our Savior and Friend. He is our **"ever-present help in trouble."**

Blessings,

Pastor Darin Aden

Pastor Darin D. Aden

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