

Weekly Update from Our Saviour's Lutheran Church – March 30, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we promised, we are sending out a weekly update to all in our congregation. We will do our best to keep you all up to speed. We of course are not meeting for weekly worship. I know that we miss communion, the fellowship with our friends, the ability to come together to worship our God. That time will come again and we look forward to it. Let me also remind you that there are disciplines of faith that we can continue to use in this time of isolation. I share two in particular:

We continue to preach and teach the Word of God. Each week we are sharing two pieces of teaching/preaching on the internet. We are posting a sermon on the Gospel reading for the week, and we are sharing a teaching time on Luther's Small Catechism. You can find these either through our church's website or on our church's Facebook page. Please use these and share these.

And second, we can pray! We can pray! I know of no better response to this crisis, or better exercise for all of us, than to pray. Please take the time to be in prayer. To help you with that, there is a long prayer at the end of this article. It is written by Rev. Cathy Ammlung (who happens to be an NALC pastor). Please use parts of this or all of this in your daily prayer life.

Before sharing the prayer, let me share a couple of announcements:

If You Need Assistance

We are intent on doing everything can to assist our congregational members, and for that matter all people, in this time of pandemic. If we can be of help, please let us know. Call the church office or Pastor Mark directly.

Thank You on the Garage Sale from Karen Braaten

Karen wants to share a word of thanks for everyone's help with our congregation's garage sale earlier this month. Karen shares – "The garage sale started off as my stewardship project, but it quickly involved all sorts of people. Thank you all for your incredible help! For those who helped with setting up and pricing, for all who brought things to be sold, for those who shopped, for those who helped clean up – thank you! This truly was a congregational effort."

And again, what an incredibly successful event!

May Our Lord Bless and Keep You All!
Pastor Mark

Here is the Prayer for a Time of Pandemic by Rev. Ammlung:

Most holy God, you are the source of all goodness, wisdom, mercy, and life. If we never before knew how much we need those great goods – how much, rather, we need you – we know now.

This isn't just about our private fears or personal concerns, nor only our church or community or nation. This is about every person on the face of this planet. How vulnerable we all are, gracious Lord! How interconnected we are – and not just by social media, party affiliation, or various identity labels. No, we're bound together by our common humanity and, through that, by the possibility of infection, illness, and death by a virus.

Father, bind us together by something even greater and stronger! Bind us together with “cords that cannot be broken,” because they are forged by your Son as he hung on a bitter Cross for the sake of the whole world. Bind us together with him in a fellowship of suffering: suffering with, and suffering for, our sisters and brothers according to the flesh. Bind us together in a fellowship deeper than our differences and stronger than death. Bind us together in Christ, crucified and risen from the dead for the salvation of all.

Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

Bestow your Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might upon all who take counsel for the nations in this time of crisis. Give them every spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social resource they need to act for the good of the people entrusted to their care. Let them be courageous, competent, collaborative, and compassionate as they ponder what course to take. Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

Thank you for the brilliant and dedicated scientists who seek to understand the infection's nature, to slow or prevent its spread, and to mitigate the suffering it causes. Thank you for doctors, nurses, and everyone from housekeepers to cooks, from dialysis and inhalation technicians to emergency room personnel, who are truly risking their lives for the sake of us all. Bless and strengthen them. Keep them safe from all harm – and grant them rest when they need it, for their own health's sake.

Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

We plead on behalf of the many people who are quarantined and isolated because of exposure to the virus; for everyone who is already ill; and for those who are at the greatest risk of severe illness or death. Hide them under the shadow of your wings, and grant them healing and hope. Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

Lord, give courage, patience, and ingenuity to everyone whose job or business is endangered by the quarantine and uncertainty. Help us to support one another, and to patronize, as we can, local small businesses in our community. Give lending institutions, landlords, and creditors the spirit of generosity and compassion, so that personal and communal suffering is not made worse by evictions, foreclosures, fines, and bankruptcies.

Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

Most gentle and gracious Father, we pray for families with children in these difficult days. Some have only one parent. Some are already stressed by things ranging from drugs to physical abuse, from illness of body, mind, or spirit to financial fragility. Lord, some of those households will be like pressure cookers, and the children might suffer most when it “blows.” Let your Spirit brood over those troubled waters. And give us eyes to see and hearts to respond as helpfully and often as we can.

Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

Forgive, enlighten, and cause repentance among the ignorant and flippant, the malicious and careless, the conspiracy theorists and the social Darwinists, the heedless young and the “it can’t happen to me” folks of all ages. Give them the common sense that you have given to guppies and fruit flies, Lord! Help us all to think beyond our own convenience (or lack thereof); our own risks or losses; our own plans or fears. Help us to think about the least of these, our Lord’s (and our) sisters and brothers, who are vulnerable in ways we really can comprehend, with your help! Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

We pray for the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church throughout the world, and for our own little portion within it. Many of us cannot worship together or receive the Holy Sacrament. Many of our pastors, priests, deacons and deaconesses, monks and sisters and lay religious, are unable to care for their flock – your flock – as they usually do. Keep us steadfast in faith, courageous in hope, and unflagging in charity. By the power of your most Holy Spirit, keep us united with your beloved Son, our common Lord and Savior, the Shepherd of our souls, and our Good Physician. Increase in us the hunger for your Word, for prayer, and for acts of forgiveness and compassion. Use us, as we are able, to further your purpose and will, and to share your unchanging love – especially among the poor, the ill, the struggling, the dying. Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

We pray for everyone who, even in this time of common suffering and crisis, refuses to turn to you. We might think that a pandemic is a board of sufficient strength to impart faith when whacked upside an unbelieving head, and we are astonished when it isn’t so! Let our words, actions, and lives be as lanterns filled with the presence and love of Jesus. Let everything we say and do be signs of your grace and mercy. Lord, we are bold to pray: Redeem this time of pandemic, so that many hearts may be softened, and many lives may be overwhelmed by a flood of repentant faith in Jesus, their Savior, Lord, and God. Lord, in your mercy, *please hear our prayer.*

We know that other needs continue to be urgent, dear Father! We ask the Spirit’s help in remembering them before you. And, for the sake of your dear Son, we pray that you may heed all our prayers and graciously answer them in accordance with your will, to your glory and for the welfare of your people.

AMEN.