

Weekly Update from Our Saviour's Lutheran Church – May 18, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

I just read a quote that struck me as profound. It is in a paper written by Dr. Nathan Yoder and Dr. David Yeago on communion. The quote isn't about communion but rather about social distancing. Social distancing - a phrase we have all become far too familiar with. But they put the idea in a whole different context. Here is the quote:

“Social distancing” may become a prayerful offering for the protection and wellbeing of the neighbor and the assistance of those with medical callings who tirelessly work to heal and make an end to this outbreak.

Wow. I've been trying to stay 6 feet away from people because of concern for my own safety and because the government is telling me to. And those are both valid reasons for social distancing. Both of those concerns are true, but Yeago and Yoder help me to see this simple act in a broader and Christian perspective. As a Christian I am called to be concerned for the needs and health of my neighbor. I have a calling, given by Jesus himself, to put the needs of those around me high on my list of priorities. And social distancing fits that call. If I stay my distance, I am protecting my neighbor. And in my own small way I am helping to slow a disease that is threatening my neighbors. I am caring for my neighbor, our society, I'm caring for first responders and the medical people in overworked ERs who need the disease slowed. I do what I do not just for myself but for those around me.

I love that perspective. All of life becomes an expression of my faith. I will stay 6 feet away. Now I confess I will still call out to and greet and speak with my neighbor. In these times of isolation that is vital too. But social distancing becomes an act of concern and ministry.

Jesus talked about the importance of sharing even a cup of cold water with others (Matthew 10:42). We follow Jesus' command with our own social distancing. I keep discovering new ways to be a disciple!

God Bless,
Pastor Mark

Outdoor Worship Service on May 31

We are planning to share an outdoor worship service on Sunday, May 31 at 9:00 a.m. The service will be in the “backyard” area behind the building. If you can please bring a lawn chair. If not we will have chairs available. Please pray for good weather! And please note the earlier time – 9:00a.m. We hope to beat the Texas heat.

We will also continue to post on-line worship services as we know that some of our members will not be able to attend the outdoor service.

Guidelines for Reopening Worship

We are planning to have our first worship service together on Sunday, May 31 at 9:00 a.m. in the backyard. Here is some information we want to share about that.

We are working to set up our worship service in accord with the recommendations that the Governor of Texas has shared for worship, and also to be sensitive to the concerns of our members. We realize that some of these recommendations might be controversial for people. Please bear with us as we work this out. This is going to be a process and inevitably one that we will revise as we proceed.

Here are the guidelines we are working with:

- First and foremost is our concern for the health and safety of our members and guests.
- Given the governor's recommendations, we are urging those most at risk, namely those aged 65 and up and those who have pre-existing medical conditions to continue to join us for **online** worship. (We do realize that some people over 65 will want to attend worship and feel comfortable doing so. In fact many of our congregational worship leaders, and our pastor for that matter, are 65 or over. If you are over 65, please make careful and wise decisions. And if you do have pre-existing medical conditions, or if you are exhibiting any symptoms, please do join the online service.)
- We will hold our first worship service in the "back yard" area behind the building. We think that an outdoor service will be safest so we will begin with that.
- If you can, please bring a lawn chair or folding chair. If you can't we will have plenty available.
- We will have a ushers available as you arrive to answer questions and to give directions. The ushers will wear masks and gloves.
- One of the pluses of outdoor worship is that we can easily do social distancing. Families of course are encouraged to sit together, but beyond that please do socially distance.
- There will be no childcare available at this time.
- We will have hand sanitizer readily available
- We are going to ask you to wear a mask. If you can please bring your own. If not we will have masks available.
- Bulletins and communion supplies will be passed out as you enter.
- We will be serving Communion. We have prepackaged packets with the bread and wine for you to pick up as you enter. We will open them together during the communion service.
- We will have a stationary offering plate for people to give their offering. We will not pass an offering plate during the service.
- We will not be serving any coffee or refreshments at this time.

One additional thought, working out how we will worship is going to be a process. We will inevitably make changes as we work things out and as the circumstances change. If we are going to err, we hope to err on the side of being overly concerned and safe. Please be patient, and do share your suggestions and ideas! Thank you!

Zoom Class on Holy Communion

We are going to offer another Zoom class this week. Our first class was great fun, we will do it again this. Our next class will be this Wednesday evening at 7:00; we will meet 3 more times. The topic will be Holy Communion. I will share some insights and understandings of communion. And we will have time to discuss some new topics about communion. We look forward to a helpful and fun discussion.

If you would like to be part of this, please send me an email at mbraaten@oslctyler.org I will send you an invitation that has all the information for how to connect.

Canceling Day Camp

I'm sorry to tell you that we have decided to cancel our week of Day Camp/Vacation Bible School for this summer. Day Camp is one of our highlights each year. We had scheduled the week of June 22-26 with Lutherhill Bible Camp again this year. But after a lot of conversation with Lutherhill and with our own folks, we decided there just isn't a way for us to do the Day Camp safely. We will cancel for this summer and then come back full force next summer. Again we really hate to do this, but it is the safest way to proceed.

Some Fun News

Here is some fun news. Our Saviour's is getting some national exposure! Do you remember the stewardship program we did last winter, where we gave out money? That was so successful that our national church is publicizing it. There is a great article about this in the latest NALC newsletter, which is sent out to all the congregations of the NALC. You can find the article at www.thenalc.org Just look for the tab on newsletter.