

Weekly Update from Our Saviour's Lutheran Church – May 4, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

If I were to pick a title for this letter, it would be “Our Ministry Continues”. I’m coming to realize that we are doing some very important ministries at OSLC during this pandemic time, and I’d like to share that with you.

I started thinking about this a few days ago when someone said to me that the church is basically shut down. That didn’t sound right to me. Yes our worship and our public gatherings are shut down for the time being. But we as the Church, we as the People of God, are still at work. And as I think about it, some very exciting things are happening because of OSLC.

Let me share with you some of the ministries that we are making happen:

We are continuing to proclaim the Word of God. The Church always has a mandate to proclaim God’s Word. That is never an option, that is Jesus’ call to us. And we are doing that, with letters and phone calls and online worship and devotions. It is amazing to me the number of people who are viewing our postings online. We are posting a worship/devotional each Sunday and most weeks we also try to add a study. And the number of viewers has been phenomenal, far beyond anything I would have expected. We actually had more people watch this year’s Easter message than last year when we had a worship service. Our weekly viewership for worship during this pandemic is exceeding our average attendance. What is happening is that people are sharing the postings with family and friends and others, and we are sharing the Word in ways I hadn’t anticipated. It has to be the work of the Holy Spirit when Easter worship gets canceled and yet the Easter message goes out to more people than before!

Now let me quickly say that I’m looking forward to the Sunday when we get together again and share in God’s Word. I can’t wait to preach to real human faces instead of a camera! And we will continue to explore additional ways that we can reach out right now. But I am starting to realize that when we can come back to worship together, we can still post our sermons and worship online. There are shut-in members of our congregation who would love that, and we can use that for outreach. I’m amazed at what God is doing through us!

Second, we are giving financially in some powerful and most helpful ways. You have been faithful in your giving to the congregation all through this pandemic. That has allowed us to continue to give to the many benevolences that we support. Many congregations haven’t been able to do that and so our support of these benevolences becomes all the more important.

And to go even further, in a number of areas our giving for others has exceeded what we had budgeted for the year. We have received special gifts and that is allowing us to give in some unexpected and incredible ways. We have sent financial gifts to four poor congregations in our mission district that we know are struggling. We have been able to support the East Texas Food Bank. (That is so vital in this time!) We are helping with needs within our congregational membership. I know we aren’t a huge congregation, but I’m amazed at what we have been able to do.

Thank you for your faithful giving. I don't know that you are aware of how significant this is. Now let me quickly add that I know some of our families are struggling and with that we don't expect you to be giving to the congregation right now. We understand the struggles and we will support and help you every way we can. But for those of us who are doing okay financially, your giving has enabled some beautiful work. Thank you!

Third, there is some great caring going on within and beyond the congregation. People are checking on each other. In this time of isolation and loneliness, that is a powerful gift of Christ! I'm spending some of my time calling members of the congregation. Many times I'm hearing that others have already called and how appreciated that is. Don't underestimate your own ability to reach out to someone, even if it is something as simple as a phone call or a shout over the back fence. Jesus commended people for sharing a cup of cold water, we can touch people with the love of Jesus with a phone conversation. Keep up the good work!

Fourth, thank you to our members who are producing face masks. We have folks who have been making masks from the time this all started, and they are still hard at work. Those masks are being worn in hospitals and nursing homes and all over this community. Folks, that is ministry!

Finally, we are praying more. A number of our members have told me that they are using their new-found free time to deepen their prayer life. And I say "Amen!" We are using this time to grow as a people of prayer. That will always deepen the health and mission of the Church. Keep at it. Please continue to pray for our congregation, our community, our nation, our world.

It is a strange time. Many of our regular and more visible ministries aren't happening. But that doesn't mean that the Church has shut down. Quite the contrary, we as the people of God are finding other ways to be about the work of our Lord. Thank you for all that you are doing.

God Bless,  
Pastor Mark

### **East Texas Food Bank**

We received a request this week from the East Texas Food Bank telling us that they have been very busy and appreciate all the support they can get. I know a number of our members already support this organization, but if you would like to please do. Contributions can be sent to East Texas Food Bank ATTN: Development Department 3201 Robertson Road Tyler, TX 75701. Or check them out at [www.easttexasfoodbank.com](http://www.easttexasfoodbank.com)

### **When will We Gather for Worship?**

One of the big questions in our congregation, and all the congregation in Tyler, is when do we re-open for worship? Our worship committee and church council are working on this. We are trying to balance our desire to come together again with being as safe as we possibly can. We have a couple of ideas that we are looking at very seriously. One is to hold our first service together outside, in our backyard. We think that will be the safest place to worship. And when we do resume worship we will continue with our online services. We know that some of our members will need to be careful and not come back to worship even when it is offered. We will continue to share online for you. Please keep our leadership in your prayers as we work on this!