

OUR SAVIOR EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

29 MARCH A.D. 2020

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT



“JESUS SAID TO THEM, ‘TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM.’ SO THEY PICKED UP STONES TO THROW AT HIM, BUT JESUS HID HIMSELF AND WENT OUT OF THE TEMPLE.”

THE DIVINE SERVICE, SETTING III

REVERENCE IN WORSHIP

The writer to the Hebrews urges, “Thus let us worship, with reverence and awe...” (12:28). Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 5, “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools...” (5:1). In part, Martin Luther defined “the sacrifice of fools” as irreverent conduct by those who show they will not listen to the Word of God (LW 15:76). In order to maintain reverence in the Lord’s house, we ask that 1) men remove their hats, 2) mobile phones, tablets, and gaming devices be turned off and put away, and 3) with the exception of parents providing appropriate snacks for small children, please refrain from bringing food and/or drink into the holy spaces.

ORDER OF THE DIVINE SERVICE, SETTING III

✠ IN THE NAME OF JESUS ✠

Stand

Invocation

P In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Exhortation

P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Kneel/Stand

Confession of Sins

P O almighty God, merciful Father,

C I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

Absolution

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Stand

Entrance Hymn

“Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness” LSB 563



1 Je - sus, Thy blood and righ - teous - ness My beau - ty
2 Bold shall I stand in that great day, Cleansed and re -
3 Lord, I be - lieve Thy pre - cious blood, Which at the
4 Lord, I be - lieve, were sin - ners more Than sands up -



are, my glo - rious dress; Midst flam - ing worlds, in
deemed, no debt to pay; Ful - ly ab - solved through
mer - cy seat of God Pleads for the cap - tives'
on the o - cean shore, Thou hast for all a



these ar - rayed, With joy shall I lift up my head.
these I am From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.
lib - er - ty, Was al - so shed in love for me.
ran - som paid, For all a full a - tone - ment made.

- 5 When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
This then shall be my only plea:
Jesus hath lived and died for me.
- 6 Jesus, be endless praise to Thee,
Whose boundless mercy hath for me,
For me, and all Thy hands have made,
An everlasting ransom paid.

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Remain standing

Kyrie



Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -



on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

P Let us pray.

C Amen.

Genesis 22:1-14

Hebrews 9:11-15

Tract

P “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth” let Israel now say—

C “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me.

P The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows."

C The LORD is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked.

Saint John 8:42-59

P The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the eighth chapter.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died and was buried.
 He descended into hell.
 The third day He rose again from the dead.
 He ascended into heaven
 and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
 From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy Christian Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life ✠ everlasting. Amen.

Hymn of the Day

“My Song Is Love Unknown” LSB 430



1 My song is love un - known, My Sav - ior's love to
 2 He came from His blest throne Sal - va - tion to be -
 4 Why, what hath my Lord done? What makes this rage and
 7 Here might I stay and sing, No sto - ry so di -
 me, Love to the love - less shown That they might love - ly
 stow; But men made strange, and none The longed - for Christ would
 spite? He made the lame to run, He gave the blind their
 vine! Nev - er was love, dear King, Nev - er was grief like
 be. Oh, who am I That for my sake
 know. But, oh, my friend, My friend in - deed,
 sight. Sweet in - ju - ries! Yet they at these
 Thine. This is my friend, In whose sweet praise
 My Lord should take Frail flesh and die?
 Who at my need His life did spend!
 Them - selves dis - please And 'gainst Him rise.
 I all my days Could glad - ly spend!

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Sit

Sermon

Stand

Prayer of the Church

Lord's Prayer

P Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

C **Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Concluding Collect

P Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes down from above, that Your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and, in the confession of Your name, abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

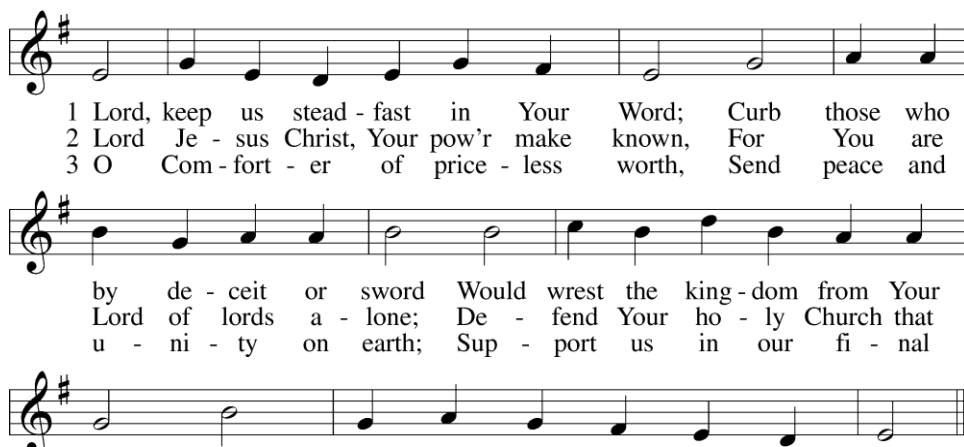
Benediction

P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

C **Amen.**

Hymn at the Retiring Procession

“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word” LSB 655



1 Lord, keep us stead - fast in Your Word; Curb those who
 2 Lord Je - sus Christ, Your pow'r make known, For You are
 3 O Com - fort - er of price - less worth, Send peace and

by de - ceit or sword Would wrest the king - dom from Your
 Lord of lords a - lone; De - fend Your ho - ly Church that
 u - ni - ty on earth; Sup - port us in our fi - nal

Son And bring to naught all He has done.
 we May sing Your praise e - ter - nal - ly.
 strife And lead us out of death to life.

Text and tune: Public domain

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠

IN PREPARATION for the Divine Service next Sunday, 5 April A.D. 2020, Palm Sunday, take time this week to read the lessons appointed for that day, Psalm 118:19-29, Zechariah 9:9-12, Philippians 2:5-11, Matthew 21:1-9, and the Hymn of the Day, “Ride On, Ride On in Majesty,” LW 105.

✠ PRAYERS ✠

THE SICK, THE SHUT-INS, THOSE IN ADVERSITY: Lucille Aldred & family, Adrian Atkinson, Leonard Badder, Dale Belmas, Dave Bosh, Susan Brandt, Mary Ann Brueggeman, Dan Bruzek, Joyce Griner, Luther Habitz, John Hangstefer, Marilyn Hatton, Donna Hay, Landon Martens, Ronald Masch, Charles McCloskey, Cathy Pawlowski, Kathy Pump, Cindy Pushman, Calvin Reinke, Randi Talsma, Susan Vogt, Kristy Sweet, Michael Whalen, Frances Wyckoff, and Matt Zavada

MILITARY: Fletcher Armstrong, Jennifer Baca, Ramone Baca, Drew Barber, Brandy Bates, Robert Bell, Corry Brennan, Tom Buller, Brian Chapman, Mark Ciero, Kathleen Cottrell, Jonathan Cross, Kenneth Eyer, Kody Fletcher, Sgt. Paul Harrison, Drew Helmreich, Chad Libby, Neil Lipon, Richard McManamon, Meighan Mills, Matthew Niendorf, Chris Robosky, Steve Roeske, Samantha Russell, Jake Simkins, Cora Spangler, Sara Spangler, Logan Terao, Albie Therrien, Austin & Maria Wright, and Alex Young

MISSIONARIES: Rev. Charles Ferry and family, Rev. Steven Mahlborg and family, and Rev. Todd Roeske and family

Strengthened by God's grace... *Pray, Commit, and then Act!*

We are fortified by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel given in Word and Sacrament to be God's people and to produce fruits of faithfulness to Him. These fruits include the giving of tithes and offerings. If you are unable to give in the usual way, feel free to use your mobile device to scan the QR code provided here. It will take you directly to the church's online giving page. *Don't have a QR scanning application? Visit the Android or Apple App Store to download a free application.*



**OUR SAVIOR EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
ANNOUNCEMENTS — 29 MARCH A.D. 2020**

WEEKLY ATTENDANCE

March 18, 2020—6:00 P.M. Midweek Office of Evening Prayer: 35

March 18, 2020—7:15 P.M. Midweek Office of Evening Prayer: 14

March 22, 2020—8:30 A.M. Divine Service: 30

March 22, 2020—9:45 A.M. Divine Service: 34

March 22, 2020—11:00 A.M. Divine Service: 39

March 22, 2020—12:15 P.M. Divine Service: 16

Tithes and Offerings

Weekly Financial Report 22 March A.D. 2020

General Fund Income Week of 03/22	\$ 16,549.00
General Operating Savings Balance 03/22	\$ 8,212.89
General Operating Checking Balance 03/22	\$ 2,369.87
1+1+1 Eng, District Donations YTD 03/22	\$ 590.25
Debt Retirement Contributions 3/1/19-03/22	\$ 23,483.77

UPCOMING NEEDS

Week of 03/29	\$ 27,993.42
Week of 04/05	\$ 27,278.80
Week of 04/12	\$ 1,720.60
Week of 04/19	\$ 34,157.26
Week of 04/26	\$ 22,191.47
Week of 05/05	\$ 25,234.00
Week of 05/12	\$ 2,038.00
Week of 05/19	\$ 28,850.60
<u>Week of 05/26</u>	<u>\$ 24,769.58</u>
Total	\$194,233.73

**QUARTERLY CONGREGATION MEETING IS POSTPONED UNTIL
THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. APRIL 19**

Week of 31 March to 5 April - Birthdays

Joy Boehne	04/01
Ryan McCollough	04/02
Jordan Dunseth	04/03
Jonathan Falconer	04/03
Shane Boehner	04/05
Margaret Cottrell	04/05

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Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Settings Three from Lutheran Service Book

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A progression of eNews Messages from Pastor Thoma during this past week:

Our Savior eNews from March 23, 2020

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Lord be with you.

It would appear that our world is indefinitely fixed with the global stamp which reads “Pandemic,” and so I don’t know what the future holds. For the most part, I’d say our efforts to maintain as a church engaged in public worship together here at Our Savior in Hartland is succeeding. It hasn’t been without snags, but it’s certainly been well worth the labor. All I can say now is that we’ll keep doing what we’re doing as safely as we can for as long as we can. We’ll keep this stride knowing that if we need to make changes, we will.

I should say that through all of this, the people who comprise the congregation of Our Savior have proven one thing in particular. Instead of fleeing from public Word and Sacrament ministry, we’ve shown an instinctive desire for preserving it, and an even more visceral dismay at the possibility it could be snatched away. There’s a hunger for it, and we just don’t want to exchange it for other, less communal avenues—at least until we’ve met the absolute end of the road in our abilities to make it happen. With this spirit, we’ve been far more inclined to triple our efforts rather than reduce them.

This is by no means an indictment of anyone in our midst who hasn’t wanted to participate, nor is it a finger of critique aimed at other congregations. These are serious times, and I believe so many are gauging their situations and communities with honesty. Like us, they’re balancing. They’re doing what they need to do to be faithful. I’m glad for that. That being said, however, I’ll admit to being surprised by the road sign in front of a nearby Methodist church that reads something like, “We’re closed for March and April. Enjoy the break. Take this time to go fishing.”

Enjoy the break? Go fishing? Hmm.

Putting the best construction on this, I'm hoping their sign committee (if they have such a thing) is just trying to be funny. Or perhaps they're using insider terms, words that only the congregation members will understand. Maybe the sign is a wink to a recent sermon which preached that even as they're no longer gathering together formally, they'll be receiving God's Word in other ways, and as they do, their communal focus will be to become better fishers of men among their neighbors. Still, the wording of the sign sure makes it look like taking a break from worship is a good thing, that somehow leisurely activities are viable alternatives to remembering the Sabbath Day and keeping it holy.

Thinking on the Third Commandment, Luther explains in the Small Catechism: "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."

Pandemic or not, the Church has never been underwhelmed by people who bear the name "Christian" and yet betray a lack of love for holding the preaching and teaching of God's Word in worship as important. The last thing I want to see is a church broadcasting such a disposition as good practice. It isn't good. It's ungodly. It's deadly to the soul. It embraces a course of spiritual starvation that robs the Christian heart of hope.

On second thought, I want to take back what I said above about not knowing what the future holds. I know plenty of what the future holds.

I'm not talking about the financial markets or executive orders. I'm not talking about whether or not the store shelves will finally be stocked like they used to be. I'm not even talking about which of us, if any, will contract the coronavirus.

I'm talking about Death.

We're all going to die. Virus or not, Death has ten thousand other doors for us to pass through, and at some point in our lives, each of us will go through one.

Being a reader of poetry, I appreciate how so many versifiers throughout history have observed and shared this fact. Dorothy Parker's words come to mind:

It costs me never a stab nor squirm
To tread by chance upon a worm.
"Aha, my little dear," I say,
"Your clan will pay me back one day."

And of course, there's Emily Dickinson's infamous rhyme:

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.

Poems like these, no matter who wrote them, are observances of the point that we're all going to die. They remind us that never in the history of the world has there ever been a man, woman,

or child from any race, color, or creed who could stand his or her ground when mortal Death came calling, saying to the dreadful specter, “I refuse to go.”

All have gone. All will go. And God affirms this. The wage for Sin is death (Romans 6:23a).

And yet, there’s something else I know about the future. It’s an awareness fed by a divine wellspring of hope born from the Holy Spirit through the Word of the Gospel. I know that Death doesn’t have the last word for believers in Christ.

“...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23b).

Through faith in Jesus Christ, eternal life is the final decree echoing well beyond Death’s ten-thousand doors and into an everlasting future.

It was François Rabelais (a 15th century French monk who was, unfortunately, overly influenced by humanism) who said with uncertainty at his Death something like, “I am going to the great perhaps.”

These words were spoken by a man who traded the truth of Mankind’s absolute depravity, as well as the certainty of an all-surpassing salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, for the deficient belief that, perhaps, mankind had a chance by his own merits, or perhaps through philosophy and science, we might gain better certainty of our eternal future.

Oh, the uncertainty of the great “perhaps”! Oh, the terror of doubt at the hour of Death!

But there’s no need for such uncertainty. Christians have certainty. The Gospel Word of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection for our salvation is the beacon of eternal hope, and Christians lean into the headwinds of the future with it well in hand. Its luminescence is fed by the Word of God and His holy Sacraments—the verbal and visible means of grace Christ has established and then mandated for His Church to gather and distribute. The Lord warns that without the oil of these means continually being poured into the lamps of our hearts, the daily readiness of our hope in Him will be extinguished. No question. If the flame of faith isn’t being fed by this fuel, it cannot burn with the torch-like strength necessary for withstanding the squalls of this attacking world (Matthew 25:1-13).

No wonder our God commands for us to go to church (Hebrews 10:19-31). No wonder we hear our Lord say over and over again to so many just how important it is to hear the Word of God and keep it (Luke 11:28). And by the way, by keeping His Word, He doesn’t mean in the shallow sense of simply knowing and obeying it, as is often preached by so many. The word in the Greek is *phyllassontes* (φυλάσσοντες). It means to fulfill one’s orders as a guard—to protect and defend a most precious possession, and to make sure no one can steal it away, being ready to raise a sword and shield against anyone or anything trying to steal it away. The harder truth in this is that sometimes the “anyone” is us and the “anything” is fishing.

Pondering all of this as I tap away at the keyboard this morning, I suppose there’s one more thing I know about the future.

What we do now will shape our practices later. Without absolute connections to Word and Sacrament ministry, people will drift away. It’s the nature of Man, and there’s plenty of data

external to the Word of God to prove this. In the midst of a time when the sources for Word and Sacrament seem to be far more limited—a time that could feel a little like a spiritual drought—don't let go of God's Word. Get it from faithful sources where and when you can. If you can go to church, do it. If you're concerned about being in public spaces during this time, stay home. Either way, commit to regular devotions, to watching your church's services that are shared online, to hearing the Word of God and keeping it.

Let fishing be what you do after your most valuable possession has been secured and the oil in your lamp has been replenished.

And with that, it's on to the news...

+ I want to say thank you to everyone for their patience as well as their words of encouragement while we've shifted gears in our worship and study lives here at Our Savior. I woke up this morning to an inbox filled with notes from thankful people, folks who were so glad they were able to worship here yesterday. The nature of the term "Christian family" has been a most splendid thing to experience. I'm sure I speak for the whole staff when I say we are truly blessed to be a part of this Christian fellowship. God bless you!

Also, and in particular, I should mention that when my laptop computer died this past Friday (right in the middle of the swirling chaos), God worked through some very special folks in my life to come to the rescue. By saving my computer, they kept me off the sidelines and in the game! God is so very good, and I am incredibly grateful!

+ Remember, if you're sick, stay home. Even if you think it's just a cold. Don't take the chance. There's a very good reason for the quarantine recommendations being encouraged in our nation right now.

+ The following online Bible studies are in the works (and in some cases already happening). I don't know the details for how to join them, but when I get that info, I'll pass it along.

Contradict: They Can't All Be Right	Thursdays, 6:30am to 7:30am
Ephesians	Fridays, once a month
Reading Isaiah with Luther	Saturdays, once a month
Hosea (a continuation)	Wednesdays, 7:00pm to 8:00pm

Others are being considered, too. Also, the ones listed above could be offered on other days and times as suggested by our members. Pastor Zwonitzer and Bryan Stearns are working on the best platform for accomplishing these. Again, once I have firm details, I will provide all the necessary details for logging in and participating.

+ The teachers are working so very hard during this time. They're using Google Classroom, and it seems to be working well. Admittedly, there's been a learning curve to the effort, but we've been blessed with a top notch principal leading a top tier staff of diligent servants. God be praised for this!

With that, I want to share a few notes from parents that Deaconess Bielby received over the past week. The last in the list is one I received by Facebook messenger.

Pastor,

The Lord's love is indeed among us. It's not (just) our personal love, but the way the Lord's love has changed each of our lives that makes this come about. His love—that unfathomable, eternal love poured out for us on the cross—comes through us to one another, and it multiplies. Please let everyone know that the mission is being accomplished!

Below are some expressions of this we received from some of our families as we roll out a quickly devised remote learning program for the students (complete with the hiccups and bumps of a new undertaking):

“I just want to say how much I appreciate all the hard work you and the rest of the staff have put into making this work. It truly touches my heart the level of care and dedication that we’ve experienced. ♥”

“We really enjoyed the video and miss you all deeply. Thank you for making this for the children!”

“We are so super impressed with ALL of your staff. I'm blown away. We are so blessed by you ALL. Thank you all so much!”

“Thank you for ALL that you are doing for our students! You guys all rock!”

“I just want to express my gratitude for the hard work and dedication of you and your staff to the remote education options and implementation for our children during this challenging time. As a mom who is forced to work remote, my time is now divided between work and education of all 4 kids. I am grateful for the opportunity to keep their brains challenged, for the structure this option provides, and for the opportunity to work with them during the day. Thank you, thank you!!”

“Hi Pastor. I hope all is well. I just wanted to share with you a thought. If ever I time I questioned whether I was making the right decision in sending my children to Our Savior... now is the time with 100 percent confidence I am so thankful for our decision. My children know God and in the end that is all that matters. Thanks be to God. I am also beyond impressed with the online school that the teachers and staff have worked so hard on.”

Indeed, God is at work through His people! Praise God for His love through our school and its faithful teaching staff! Behold, they are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord their labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

+ Our LCMS President, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, has posted a wonderful video that I'd encourage you to watch. You can see it by visiting: <https://vimeo.com/397483968>

+ I have added A TON of at-home resources to our website so that, even if you can't attend worship, you have what you need for staying well-fed with God's Word. You can find them by visiting: <https://www.oursaviorhartland.org/devotional-materials-for-use-at-home-or-away/>

+ Don't forget how crucial it is to remain faithful in your stewardship during this time. As I've mentioned before, if you feel as though you cannot attend worship in person, but you still want to keep your tithe/offering commitment, you can do so by way of our online giving portal located here: <https://www.shelbygiving.com/app/giving/oursaviorhartland>

+ I spoke to both Dinesh D'Souza and Dr. James Sterba. We're going to postpone the debate scheduled for Saturday, May 2. With that, the dinner celebration for our school's 40th anniversary scheduled for Sunday, May 3, is postponed, too.

Postponed, not cancelled. Once everything calms down, we'll pick new dates and carry forth.

That's it for this week.
Blessings to you in the Lord!
In Jesus,
Pastor Thoma+

Our Savior eNews Update from March 24, 2020

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Lord be with you.

As you may have heard, Governor Whitmer has issued an Executive Order for a statewide lockdown. All public services deemed non-essential are to remain closed until April 13, or until the order is lifted. That being said, Line 10 of the mandate reaffirms public worship in churches as exempt from prosecution. Nevertheless, even as churches are not limited in how many attendees may participate, they are being strongly encouraged to take every precaution as their worshippers meet together.

More than mindful of our responsibility to be faithful to Christ as well as the people of God here at Our Savior, the Elders have established exemplary practices that truly reflect diligent concern and the highest regard for safety.

Before the Executive Order, we were in "Plan B." The Elders met again today at 2:00pm, and now we're in "Plan C." There was much discussion. Each of the Elders who attended the meeting brought thoughtful points to the gathering, and you can be sure that every angle was scrutinized and sharpened for being of better service.

Our current structure of four Sunday services limited to 50 attendees is now canceled. Now we will be offering a total of 12, thirty-minute services limited to 10 attendees each.

A short order for Confession/Absolution, Word, Preaching, and the Lord's Supper will occur. Each service will have an online registration access portal that will close once the maximum has

been reached. Please choose the service you'd prefer to attend. You are asked to be on time for the service you choose. An order of service will be provided.

Also, I humbly ask that you do your best to fill the earliest appointments first. Also, if you see others have already selected your time slot and yet there remains room for you (and your family), please consider joining with these others. Consolidation and timeliness in this effort is crucial to its success.

Available service windows are:

8:00am	11:00am
8:30am	11:30am
9:00am	12:30pm
9:30am	1:00pm
10:00am	1:30pm
10:30am	2:00pm

Please know that these individual services will be running back to back, with disinfecting in between. It is imperative that you are on time for the service you choose. If you determine you cannot make it, please cancel your registration.

When you arrive for your timeslot, please make your way to the first row of pews on either the lectern and pulpit sides of the nave. If another group is before you and is still in the nave, please wait in the entryway (not the Narthex) to the church until I invite you in.

If you are sick, stay home. Even if you think it's a cold, don't come to the church, but instead watch the service that will be video recorded and shared online.

In conclusion, we pray the Lord's gracious hand in our efforts, trusting that He will serve us with His loving kindness through Word and Sacrament. Of course the temptation is to jettison the effort altogether, and yet it is precisely in times such as these that God's people need the comfort provided through the Means of Grace—namely the Lord's Supper.

I'm praying for all of you.

In Jesus,

Pastor Thoma+

P.S.

Beginning immediately, Wednesday services will be recorded and shared online at the regularly scheduled time (as long as everything goes according to plan). We'll be opening up the link, so no password will be required.

[Our Savior eNews Update #2 from March 24, 2020](#)

All,

I received the following from our Parish Administrator, Nicole Spangler. It answers some important questions, so please take a look!

Blessings!

Pastor Thoma+

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

These are unusual times. You may be wondering, if I am not physically attending church, how can I still financially support my congregation?

There are many options. So that you can make a fully informed decision, here are all the ways to contribute without leaving your home, along with the benefits of each method.

- Mail a check to the church. Mail is still being collected regularly. Any contribution checks received in the mail are included with the Sunday offerings.
- Use your bank's online bill pay feature. Checks arrive in the mail and are handled as above.
- Sign up for Joyful Response automatic ACH transfer (form attached). Authorization must be in writing (via form email to nspangler@oursaviorhartland.org). This goes directly into the LCEF General Fund Savings Account. No physical contact. All bank fees are waived by LCEF. This is a recurring transaction and requires you to contact nspangler@oursaviorhartland.org to change or cancel this method of payment.
- Give online at <https://www.shelbygiving.com/app/giving/oursaviorhartland> - either a one time gift or set up a recurring gift. No physical contact. You 'push' payments. You can use credit, debit, or a bank account. Our Savior does not receive your account information. This method links contributions directly to our church management software.
- Text Giving - Text 'Give' to 248-845-1095 - you will be sent a link to online giving. Same benefits as online giving.

God be with each of us during our time apart.

Blessings,

Nicole

Our Savior eNews Update from March 25, 2020

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

We begin with prayer.

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Lord God, heavenly Father, we love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells. By Your Holy Spirit, our hearts are ever set toward You. Be with us in this hour of concern. Draw us to Your side, and give to us the peace this world cannot give. When our spirits are low, lift them by the message of our redemption in Jesus. When our bodies are weak, enliven them for accomplishing all that You would have us do, namely to be the salt and light of Your goodness in the world. All of this we pray through the merits and*

mediation of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever. Amen.

Friends, I've written a few messages in my life that were harder than others to scribe. I think this may be one to land in that category. The prayer above was easy, but it took me more than a few minutes just to come up with these first few sentences.

Over the course of the last few weeks, there've been so many forked roads, and with each eventual decision made, the way seemed to get narrower. And once a stride was announced, things changed quickly, leaving many of us feeling like we were living in a land of indecision.

We're Lutherans. Change is difficult. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. Change can shift the foundation of certainty, and who wants that? Not me, that's for sure.

Anyway, with the message I sent yesterday communicating our plan for worship in response to the Governor's Executive Order locking down the state, I received several responses from among you, all from people I respect and trust. I spent the better part of last night prayerfully considering these heartfelt email messages. All were thankful to the Lord that as a congregation we've done all we can to maintain the public administration of Word and Sacrament ministry in our midst. And they were also endearing letters expressing deep concern for my physical wellbeing and that of my family. The messages were tender, and I'll cherish them forever.

So many of you acknowledged the grueling nature of the days ahead—twelve, 30-minute services this Sunday ramped up to a matching schedule from Palm Sunday to Easter. Doing the math, there'd most likely be sixty-three or so services in all. An overabundance of speaking and a massive amount of mental and physical exertion.

It meant a lot to read your messages. Truly. And I awoke to a few more this morning, some from the Elders who serve all of you. Together, they all revealed that you care. They all showed your loving kindness, the sort of compassion that could only be born from a faith given by the Holy Spirit.

And there was something else to these messages. They communicated an unswerving devotion to the Lord.

There was a sense in them that I needn't worry, that my concern for this expanse of separation from your church home might become a deadly normal in your lives. But you were clear. You told me that Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church means the world to you and that you so desperately desire for things to be as they were—and when they do get back to normal, you'll be right back in your usual pews. But until then, you were okay keeping your families safe while receiving the gifts of God's Word and preaching in other ways.

This made me smile, too. You assured me of your heart's location. It's being held in the hands of Jesus.

I'll add to this prayerful pondering that my wife, Jennifer, is terribly concerned. I shared with her some of the messages I received. We sat and talked for quite a while. The State of Michigan is currently ranked number 9 in the world for its rate of the spread of the disease. Knowing the amount of interaction that would happen during Sunday worship and Holy Week, this detail should matter to me. And it does. Our son, Harrison, is an overly stricken asthmatic. To give you

a little perspective, he went to play at a friend's house a few years ago. They didn't have a dog in the home, but all of the other kids who came over had dogs. Afterward, Harrison was in the hospital for about four days. His condition is that bad. Covid-19 attacks the lungs. If your lungs are as weak as Harrison's, you could be in real trouble. The illness is also very dangerous for people with autoimmune diseases. Evelyn's diabetes is a concern in this regard. Her type 1 diabetes is pretty unpredictable.

Thinking on these things, Jennifer's concern is real, and it should matter to me that by serving all of you, I exponentially increase my potential for contracting the virus and carrying it home to our children—not to mention possibly sharing it with you.

Don't get me wrong. Jennifer and I trust Jesus' care. Still, what if we didn't do all we could do with the means at our disposal, especially as current projections are that as much as 70% of the Michigan population could become infected if we don't maintain the statewide quarantine.

I've read the CDC reports.

In the end, I guess what I'm saying is that I'm gauging the pulse of the congregation and I'm measuring it against what I know and can do. I don't want to drive forward, and in so doing, bring offense to you when offense is not necessary. If this were truly a doctrinal issue, I'd have no issue with hurting your feelings. But it isn't. We actually can worship while refraining from the Lord's Supper.

I'm listening to you—and I'm listening to and loving my wife and family, too. I want to do what's faithful, and right now, faithful seems to have a multitude of dimensions to consider.

Again, I've wrestled with this, and I've come to the conclusion that I'm at the end of the road here. I'm not a quitter, but I believe it'll have to be sufficient—not optimal, just sufficient—to provide for your worship needs by way of video recordings. Of course, as I said, the Lord's Supper won't be possible, and that hurts the most. Still, from the messages I've received from so many of you, I suspect it'll be all the more grand when we come together again in the near future. Till then, the Word and preaching will be the food our generous Lord will serve.

I'm sorry if this upsets you. It hurts me, too. More than words can express. And as I've said more than once in the adult Bible study, a pastor is always only one well-intended decision away from ticking someone off. Still, we'll get through this. We will. I'm sure of it. God is faithful. He's brought us this far. And why on earth would He suddenly choose to leave us in despair? That would go against His nature, and not to mention His ageless promises to always have a care for His people (Hebrews 13:5). With that in mind, as Christians, we already know that what the world might call despair is really only for us the painful eagerness of hope. We know our God is loving us through the good and the bad. This draws us to our tiptoes in expectation of the Last Day, when we'll be with our Lord forever!

Having said all of this, the plan I put together for this weekend is canceled, and all services will be recorded and uploaded to the website. I've shared this new course with the Elders, and while I haven't heard back from all of them, most have responded by email or phone in support, so I feel I can share this message sooner rather than later.

I'll plan to upload Sunday services and have them posted by 9:30am. The next two Wednesdays in Lent will be ready and uploaded by 7:00pm. Pastor Pies is preaching this Wednesday. He'll be doing it from home and I'll splice it into the service. Pastor Zwonitzer is preaching this Sunday and next Wednesday.

At this point in time, I'm still working on Palm Sunday, Holy Week, the Triduum, and Easter Sunday. There's a lot to sort out there. I'll communicate to you as I get all of them together. I'd expect our regular service times throughout.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reply. Of course, if anything changes, as always, I'll let you know. I sure hope that the only change that's needed after this is to say, "All is well! Come back to the Lord's house!"

In the meantime, God be with you. You're in my prayers. You've certainly made it very clear that I'm in yours, and for that, I'm incredibly blessed and more than thankful.

To conclude, ponder these words of Jesus, and know His great love:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid... I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 14:27; 15:1-8).

In His holy and comforting name,
Pastor Thoma+
