

OUR SAVIOR EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

26 APRIL A.D. 2020

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER



THE DIVINE SERVICE, SETTING ONE
9:30 A.M.

ORDER OF SERVICE

DIVINE SERVICE, SETTING ONE, PAGES 151 - 166

Kneel/Stand

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.
P If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
C But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Kneel/Stand

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

- P** Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.
C Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.
P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Entrance Hymn "This Joyful Eastertide" (LSB 482)

1 This joy - ful Eas - ter - tide A - way with sin and
 2 Death's flood has lost its chill Since Je - sus crossed the
 3 My flesh in hope shall rest And for a sea - son

sor - row! My love, the Cru - ci - fied,
 riv - er; Lov - er of souls, from ill
 slum - ber Till trump from east to west

Has sprung to life this mor - row:
 My pass - ing soul de - liv - er:
 Shall wake the dead in num - ber:

Refrain

Had Christ, who once was slain, Not burst His three-day pris - on,
 Our faith had been in vain: But now has Christ a - ris - en, a -
 ris - en, a - ris - en; But now has Christ a - ris - en!

Text and tune: Public domain

Kyrie

A In peace let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mer - cy.

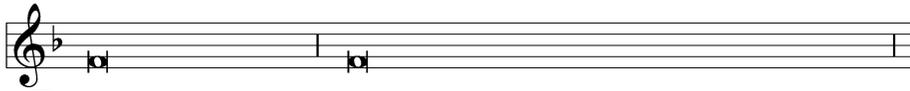
A For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

C Lord, have mer - cy.

A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,
 and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



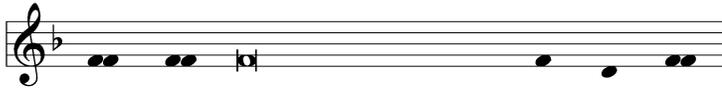
A For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise



let us pray to the Lord.



C Lord, have mer - cy.



A Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord.



C A - - - men.

This Is the Feast



C This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



- 1 — Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose
- 2 Pow - er, rich - es, wis - dom, and strength, and
- 3 Sing with all the peo - ple of God, and
- 4 Bless - ing, hon - or, glo - ry, and might be to
- 5 For the Lamb who was slain has be -



blood set us free to be peo - ple of God. *Refrain*
 hon - or, bless - ing, and glo - ry are His. *Refrain*
 join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion: *Stanza 4*
 God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - - - men. *Refrain*
 gun His reign. Al - le - lu - ia. *Final Refrain*



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Salutation and Collect of the Day



P The Lord be with you.



C And al - so with you.

P Let us pray.

O God, through the humiliation of Your Son You raised up the fallen world. Grant to Your faithful people, rescued from the peril of everlasting death, perpetual gladness and eternal joys; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Old Testament Reading

Ezekiel 34:11-16

After the reading:

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Psalm 23



*The LORD is my | shepherd;**

I shall not | want.

*He makes me lie down in green | pastures.**

He leads me beside still | waters.

He restores my | soul.*

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's | sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with | me;*
your rod and your staff, they comfort | me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my | enemies;*
you anoint my head with oil; my cup | overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my | life,*
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for- | ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the | Son*

And to the Holy | Spirit;

As it was in the be- | ginning,*

Is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

*The LORD is my | shepherd;**

I shall not | want.

*He makes me lie down in green | pastures.**

He leads me beside still | waters.

Epistle

I Peter 2:21-25

After the reading:

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

Alleluia and Verse

Kantor: Alleluia refrain; Congregation: Alleluia refrain

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

The Lord was known to them in the breaking of the bread. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

Congregation: Alleluia refrain

Holy Gospel

Saint John 10:11-16

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

C Glo - ry to You, O Lord.

After the reading:

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

(Please remain standing for the Hymn of the Day.)

Hymn of the Day "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (LSB 709)

1 The King of love my shep - herd is, Whose good - ness
2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, My ran - somed
3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, But yet in
4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill With Thee, dear

fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
soul He lead - eth And, where the ver - dant
love He sought me And on His shoul - der
Lord, be - side me, Thy rod and staff my

I am His And He is mine for - ev - er.
pas - tures grow, With food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
gent - ly laid And home re - joic - ing brought me.
com - fort still, Thy cross be - fore to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
Thine unction grace bestoweth;
And, oh, what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever!

Text and tune: Public domain

Sit

Sermon

Stand

Apostles' Creed

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.

Prayer of the Church

Lord's Prayer

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, You have called Your Church to witness that in Christ You have reconciled us to Yourself. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit we may proclaim the good news of Your salvation so that all who hear it may receive the gift of salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns in unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

IN PREPARATION for the Divine Service next Sunday 3 May A.D. 2020 The Fourth Sunday of Easter, take some time this week and read the lessons appointed for that day, Psalm 147:1-11, Isaiah 40:25-31, 1 Peter 2:11-20, John 16: 16-22, and the Hymn of the Day, "With High Delight Let Us Unite." LSB 483.

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 – 26 APRIL A.D. 2020**

✠ PRAYERS ✠

THE SICK, THE SHUT-INS, THOSE IN ADVERSITY: Lucille Aldred & family, Adrian Atkinson, Leonard Badder, Dale Belmas, Jordan Bennett, Dave Bosh, Susan Brandt, Mary Ann Brueggeman, Dan Bruzek, Luther Habitz, John Hangstefer, Marilyn Hatton, Donna Hay, Jim Liimatta, 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

Tithes and Offerings

Weekly Financial Report 19 April A.D. 2020

General Fund Income Week of 04/19	\$ 22,358.60
General Operating Savings Balance 04/19	\$ 3,937.60
General Operating Checking Balance 04/19	\$ 5,582.89
1+1+1 Eng. District Donations YTD 04/19	\$ 590.25
Debt Retirement Contributions 3/1/19-04/19	\$ 23,483.77

UPCOMING NEEDS

Week of 04/26	\$ 19,525.04
Week of 05/03	\$ 25,684.00
Week of 05/10	\$ 2,353.21
Week of 05/17	\$ 27,050.60
Week of 05/24	\$ 25,317.53
Week of 05/31	\$ 32,456.29
Week of 06/07	\$ 919.21
Week of 06/14	\$ 26,021.60
<u>Week of 06/21</u>	<u>\$ 26,913.03</u>
Total	\$186,240.51

Message from Nicole Spangler

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

Week of 27 April to 3 May

Birthdays

Mary Ann	Brueggeman	04/27	Quinn	Santure	04/30
Brian	Boehne	04/28	Solomon	Spangler	04/30
Douglas	Haponek	04/29	David	Tabbert	05/01
Michael	Neuroth	04/30	Dawn	Schleif	05/02
Luke	Nichols	04/30	Jacob	Zells	05/03

Anniversaries

Eric and Karoline Hicks	04/29	20 yrs.
Eric and Deirdre Kolm	05/03	23 yrs.

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Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Settings Three from Lutheran Service Book
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Our Savior eNews from April 20, 2020

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Lord be with you.

I mentioned to Jennifer that these Monday morning eNews introductions are a little harder to write because of the quarantine. Normally I can sit down, and within a few minutes, I discover a thought that leads me into something worth sharing—something that is, hopefully, of use to you. But not so much these days. I think this is true because I'm apart from my best writing prompts—you!

Most of what inspires me emerges from daily, face-to-face interactions with people, and right now, I'm at a severe disadvantage in this—at least for the time being.

I suppose I could mine social media. Although, that's not my preferred place to interact with you, nor is it the safest place these days to look for material in general...unless, of course, I want to spend time providing verbal contour for what the Bible already describes well enough as the Sin-nature. Social media is a real ugly place right now. It seems the worst parts of ourselves are parading through its alleyways. Fear of COVID-19 is playing a big part, but so is the lack of space being allowed to the fearful by the bombastic among us.

Indeed, there are varying degrees of concern. I'll confess I used to be more concerned than I am now. I've been included in a few local and federal conversations suggesting that while the virus is indeed a mean kid on the block—the kind you don't want to run into if you don't have to—nevertheless the incoming data is more than proving the kid to be less the monster and more the mouse casting an unnecessarily frightening shadow. In the end, most folks are more likely to die from flesh-eating bacteria they encountered while working in the yard than to contract and die from COVID-19. Of course I'm still bathing in hand sanitizer, both for your sake and for the sake of my family. (By the way, I keep poking at Jennifer, saying that in a few years, don't be surprised if there's a spike in never-before-seen hand cancers.)

I'm doing my best to land in the middle, while at the same time, I'm unwilling to accept statements sourced from wholly insufficient evidence claiming absolute certainty. That's about as close to the definition of ignorance as any could get, and folks who do this are fanning preventable wildfires of panic. No one should be making decisions (or declarations) in this way. It's a bad idea, and history proves bad results when people do. And yet this seems to be the general tenor for many in the mainstream media. Of course this practice has touched down with a thud in social media. To make things worse, radical individualism remains in high gear.

Everyone is right and no one is wrong. What a mess.

I participated in one particular phone call with a friend in D.C. suggesting that if the shelter-in-place orders in some of the stricter states (Michigan being one of them) go much further than April 30, it's likely civil disobedience will begin to erupt. People are already beginning to protest in mass numbers in many state capitals. If civil unrest does become open disobedience, the Church will need to be ready to weigh in. I shared this information with my Bishop among a gathering of other English District (LCMS) pastors during a recent Zoom meeting, and in so doing, I expressed my concern that the brothers ought to be ready, if necessary, to help their people navigate the turbulence. For starters, silently, I'm hoping all pastors are brushing up on their understanding of the "Two Kingdoms" doctrine.

As a quick side note, I'm also finding it rather interesting how certain pastors I know, ones who've been incredibly vocal in their opposition to the Church having anything to do with politics, well, it seems they're asking me what I know, what I've heard, what my plans are. They've a newfound interest in all-things-government now that so much of what they do has been seized by the civil authorities. The government has claimed emergency authority for stepping into the Church's sphere, and now the so-called separation of Church and State has become blurry, while at the same time making the purposes for my own efforts in the public square all the more clear. An avenue has presented itself for the state to justify control of the Church, and now churches are being fined, pastors are being ticketed, and in some states some pretty ridiculous mandates have been issued, even ones forbidding online services.

Interesting, huh? But how far should we let this go? When do we actually need to say out loud, "I will obey God and not men"?

Anyway, getting back to the premise of social media as an ugly place...

Just to give you an example, I've come pretty close a few times in the last week to deleting my Facebook account altogether. I actually typed up a list of the pros and cons while walking on the treadmill. Both categories had an equal number of items. So much for that. Also, while I try not to unfriend people, no matter how cruel they can be, I'll admit to having come close a few times this past week to begging some folks to unfriend me. But I didn't... as usual.

Believe it or not, I sort of have to be in Facebook. I'm certainly not here for casual scrolling before bed. It's a significant means of communication for me. Not only has it been beneficial for communicating our congregation's theological identity, but there are groups in which I'm involved that only use Facebook forums for meetings. I can't participate if I'm not in it.

In the meantime, the essential skills I've learned over the years for using social media are proving valuable. I continue to do my level best to stay in the mix while at the same time letting the hurtful commentary sail by without incident. I have to ignore quite a bit of personal accosting (much of which comes through private messaging) if I want to participate in the open waters of discussion I think are of consequence—or if I want to make or encourage points I believe are important. Truthfully, however, I confess to having discovered a long while ago that ignoring the venomous words from folks on social media isn't as hard as one might think. Over time, I've learned that the people with whom I share genuine relationships are less likely to attack and more likely to either converse or simply ignore me. The folks who steam and then go for my jugular, well, I've realized it's really me who's injecting the poison into my veins when I let their words actually matter to me. When I remember that violent language—insults, name-calling, all-caps swearing, persistent trolling—is typically nothing more than the veiling of shallow opinion, when I remember their words and actions are really more at enmity with reality, then their efforts lose their sting and I can move on to other things unshaken. Usually I just say something like "okay" and then move along.

Publilius Syrus was right when he said that cruelty is strengthened by tears. And so the saying must go: "Sticks and stones may break my bones..." Well, you know the rest.

There's lots of venom being spit in these arenas right now, and because I'm cognizant that social media is one of the only avenues for human interaction for many of you right now, I pray specifically for your mental agility in avoiding its darker underbelly. I can't avoid it, but I hope you can.

If not, might I suggest one practical—nay, Godly—way to persevere in it?

I once heard someone define the advancement of a civilization as the communal ability to increase in things it can do without having to think about doing them.

Don't let this definition be the description of your relationships with others. Think before you type. Think once more before you post. Check your information. Check the spirit behind your words. Why are you writing? Why are you responding? And then think one last time as you move your mouse and lead the cursor to the symbol for posting.

Be prayerfully mindful of what you're about to say.

By the way, this isn't novel advice for Christians. We know what humans are capable of. We know our God knows the sinful inclinations of the heart, too, and so He warns us. We trust Him for the better weapons that lead to peace on the other side of war.

"Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends" (Proverbs 17:9).

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6).

“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless” (James 1:26).

“Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit” (1 Peter 3:10).

“The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things” (Proverbs 15:28).

“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding” (Proverbs 17:27).

Of course, none of this is to say that truth must be silent in the face of error. Indeed, errors need fixing. Just be careful when you aim to do so. And be ready to realize you may be just as wrong as the person you’re trying to correct.

No one but Christ has all the answers. Indeed, we’re truly living in a time for testing our own humility.

I suppose I could wrap this up by sharing that pastors, whether in real life or in the virtual world, live and die by the maxim that we’re always only one word away from ticking someone off. These days it seems no matter where we are and what we are saying, someone is offended. God willing, most pastors are carefully deliberating as they scribe. Having said this, whether or not you’re in the same kind of unavoidable spotlight as pastors, here in the midst of what is nothing less than the close quarters of a social media concentration camp, all of us together can be mindful of the long-term damage a careless word leaves behind in a community of friends.

Again, my point here, please be prayerfully mindful.

For those who’ve found themselves already offended (or far too easily offended by pretty much everything), I simply say to pray and then move along. Pray for a heart of peace and keep going. If you’re already cruising along deflecting the hypersensitivity, or you’re covering over the careless offenses with a humble spirit, odds are the irritations will ricochet right off you and probably won’t even rise to the level of Matthew 18 and its instructions for reconciliation. Of course, if they do, I’m here to help. But in the end, my guess is that by God’s grace, you’ll make it through this slow-moving narrative where, seemingly, everyone’s opinion is the annoying theme resonating on every page. Just move on, trusting that with each turn of the page, you’ll be closer to the end of this worldwide episode, and with that, the moments of annoyance along the way will comprise a volume worthy of being filed in the “Of Little Use to Anyone” section of your mental library.

Okay, I guess that’s enough typing for this morning. Sheesh, I sure do miss seeing you folks in person. 😊

With that, it’s on to the news...

+ You probably heard the news yesterday regarding Joyce Griner. Once again, please keep Terry in your prayers as he sorrows over her death. Pray that he would keep his eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. In Him is the promise of eternal life, and the joyful reunion with all believers in Christ in heaven!

+ Since we’re so spread out these days, there isn’t the normal stream of news to share. That being said, two things...

First, if you have any news items to share, be sure to let me know. I’ll get them into the eNews.

Second, how about sending me photos of just what it is you and your family are doing while in quarantine! I’ll gather them together and share with the whole congregation! In other words, only share photos with me you don’t mind being shared with everyone on this eNews list.

Sounds like fun, huh? Alright, get to sending!

+ I'm about to sit down with and proctor the Seminary entrance exams for Solomon Spangler. Pray for the success of this dear brother in Christ who will make a fantastic pastor!

+ God is moving mightily through His people. Going into this past Sunday, we were able to get caught up on our outstanding bills, and by the time we were done, we had \$22,987.54 in the general fund checking account. We have \$38,318.26 due this week, so if you have yet to give your offering, please do so. Of course you're free to stop by the church office to leave it in the brass mailbox by the door (just be sure to call the church to let me know you're doing that), or you can go online and use the ShelbyNext giving portal at <https://www.shelbygiving.com/app/giving/oursaviorhartland>.

God continue to bless and strengthen you for faithfulness!

+ Take a look at the following note from Shirley Sturkin, our Lutherans For Life team leader!

Michigan Lutherans for Life has awarded Harrison Thoma's life essay, "God's Love Makes Me Normal", 2nd place in the annual Michigan Lutherans for Life essay contest. The judges particularly appreciated Harrison's thoughtful analysis that Jesus "also had to heal 'normal' people" since we are all sick in sin. As you may recall, in January the Our Savior Life team coordinated a Life essay contest for the Senior Confirmation class where Harrison's essay was announced the winner during Sunday Adult Bible study. Subsequently his essay was forwarded to the Michigan Lutherans for Life competition resulting in the second place finish. Congratulations Harrison!

Jennifer and I are proud of Harrison. He did a great job. If you're interested in reading both the first and second place essays, I've attached the latest Lutherans for Life newsletter as a PDF. Enjoy! And praise God for these up and coming youth who are engaging on the frontlines for life!

+ The Mahlburg family's April newsletter is out! Take a look [here](#)!

+ If you haven't yet, take a moment to watch the Easter devotion with our Synodical President, Bishop Harrison. It is well worth your while! Take a look by clicking [here](#)!

+ Here's a few very important notes from our Principal, Deaconess Sara Bielby. Take a look!

1) We've decided to go ahead with the Red Cross Blood Drive scheduled at Our Savior on May 15 from 2-7pm. As you may have heard, there is currently a shortage of donated blood. A plan is being developed to help meet that need, and also honor Tom Hay, our Blood Drive coordinator of many years. Most of the school will be roped off to donors with the exception of the cafeteria and gym. Temperatures will be taken at the door, and extra safety precautions will be implemented by the Red Cross. Donors may make an appointment with the Red Cross; walk-in donors are also welcome. Jeff Hoppe, Pastor Thoma, Kim Leonard, Joel Hornick, and I are all in concert for supporting this, and we're sure it will be a blessing for so many in need.

2) The school reconvenes online today after Easter break. Kudos to the teachers who continue to provide online learning for our 130 school students, and to the parents who are working with them at home. Teachers put in a great deal of time and effort not only with preparation beforehand, and grading after, but in seeking to make best use of the tools and technology to foster learning. They are putting in a similar amount of time with online teaching as in the classroom, and lament the comparably little time they are able to keep students engaged. Parents also are undergoing a whole new rhythm, some working full-time from home while trying to assist multiple children with schoolwork and juggling limited technology resources. All that to say, we are navigating a major and sudden transition together, and for the most part, the patience, thankfulness, forbearance, and incredible perseverance shown by all in our community is truly a marvel. Your efforts are deeply appreciated.

+ A very important note that I should have shared with you a long time ago.

If you see, hear, or receive from anyone an invitation to sign the “Fair and Equal” petition, PLEASE DO NOT SIGN IT!

The “Fair and Equal” initiative is an effort to circumvent the legislature in order to change the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act of 1976. They need 542,000 signatures to do this. If they get them, and it’s sent to the statewide ballot and approved by voters in November, it would expand the definition of “sex” in the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity or expression,” guaranteeing public accommodation and employment among religious-based organizations that may disagree based on religious conscience, leading to extreme reverse discrimination as we’ve seen in other states—Jack Phillips being an example.

Does this affect us? Absolutely!

If this gets on the ballot and is approved, Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church and School could get into a lot of trouble for our Biblical stance on human sexuality and what that means with regard to our communion membership requirements as well as our hiring and firing practices in both the church and school. We will not be able to turn someone away from the altar or refuse them employment for reasons involving their position on human sexuality.

Please, PLEASE do not sign the petition! This is a moment for protecting religious liberty and preserving faithful Christian doctrine and practice.

That’s it for this week. God willing we’ll be free to gather together again for worship and Bible study sooner than later. Once I know what the plan is, I’ll get word out ASAP. I can’t wait for the day!

In Jesus,
Pastor Thoma+

