

Salem Lutheran Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Greetings to all:

At this time we have “stayed tuned to” and continue to read articles and daily updates issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding COVID-19, the Coronavirus. The latter two suggest that a significant way to get ahead of this virus is through physically distancing, also referred as “Social Distancing,” from one another to minimize the spread of the virus.

Following today’s message from Maryland’s Governor Larry Hogan, Salem Lutheran Children’s Center is closing along with Maryland’s public schools beginning March 16th - 27th.

This afternoon I received a thoughtfully crafted pastoral letter from our Bishop, Bill Gohl, titled, “*To Meet or Not to Meet?*” Bishop Gohl offered perspectives on both sides of the question leaving the ultimate choice to meet or not meet to the congregation. In conversation with Lynn Cox, Salem’s Council President, we both agreed with Bishop Gohl’s thoughts about *fasting from communal worship*. **We have chosen to extend care for one another and commit to love our neighbors by suspending worship for the next two weeks (March 15th and March 22nd).** It is our hope and prayer that by temporarily suspending worship we may reduce the spread of both the Coronavirus and the fear and anxiety it triggers.

Following are the ways we will support Salem’s family during this time:

- While the center is closed, both the preschool facility and the church will be cleaned and sanitized. We recommend that after the thorough cleaning the entire building will remain closed to gathering activities until it is decided the school may reopen and communal worship may resume.
- The prayer chain will be in frequent contact and keep you updated. And, you are encouraged to check on each other via phone, texting, Internet, Facebook, etc.
- As your pastor, I am here for you. I am interested in your concerns, as needs may arise, and to simply enjoy conversation. Please use my cell phone number, 443.465.6668, to better reach me and for your Caller ID to recognize my number as it appears.
- Online worship service for each Sunday, Wednesday Lenten services, and emailed daily devotions. For anyone who does not have Internet access the service and sermon can be mailed to you; please let the prayer chain or me know if you would like to receive these worship documents via the US Mail. Alternatively, please let me and/or the prayer chain folks have your email address if you’d like to receive the devotions electronically.
- Bishop Gohl will live stream on Facebook and YouTube Sunday Services each week at 10 a.m., and provide a Midweek Lenten Service on Wednesdays a 7 p.m. You are in his prayers.

You are in my thoughts and prayers during these challenging and complicated times too. Most importantly our Lord holds and watches over each you and the whole world every day. *Psalm 121*

With my love for Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and for you.... *Pastor Betty Lou*