

St. Thomas Lutheran Church News

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Pastor's Column...

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. Matthew 6:34

In the movie, 50 First Dates, the female lead character has a kind of amnesia where each morning she wakes up she's forgotten everything that happened the previous day. I feel a lot like that lately. "Wait. Didn't I invent the wheel yesterday? Huh. Guess not. Time to invent the wheel...again?" So many things seem to be changing on a daily basis that it's hard to keep up with. Every time I think I've got a good bead on reality and have a plan forward, I bring it up to someone else and they point out things that things have changed since I came up with the plan or they see something really important that I missed. It's exhausting.

A stitch in time saves nine, the old saying goes. We establish patterns in our lives – sequences of things we do throughout the day where we can put it on autopilot and not have to think about what we're doing – and so many of these patterns have been stripped from us. I have never gone through anything that has so totally dominated my days and changed what seems to be everything in my life. And it changes every day so I can't seem to get to a "new normal."

A few things seem apparent to me right now. (Disclaimer: I've been wrong before!) First, what we're going through at this time is not how it will be forever. This is only for a while. It seems like forever, but this time of self-isolation will pass, as almost everything does. My mom always said that you can make it through anything you can see the end of. While we do not know exactly how long we'll have to live our lives this way, we do know that it will end. So hang in there. We'll get through this. Together. Maybe not physically together, but definitely together.

Another thing I believe is true is that this pandemic will change how we live our lives long term. I cannot begin to guess exactly what these changes will look like, but this will make a lasting impact. (For example, will you ever wash your hands the same way you did before this happened?) Remember how 9/11 changed the experience of going to an airport and flying? I believe that the coronavirus will change our lives much more than that, in part because it has affected the entire world, not just the U.S.

Living in the midst of continual and rapid change with the uncertainty of what tomorrow may bring, it is awfully easy to feel overwhelmed. Some days I feel like I'm down to my last nerve before noon. I'm sure some of you don't even make it until noon.

I'm not going to give you a bunch of advice, but I would ask the following of you. Be patient with yourself and those you are "stuck" living with. You're all going to be wrong a good deal of the time. The learning curve is steep with this. So allow yourself and others the grace of making mistakes on a pretty regular basis.

And please be gentle with yourself and others. It's so very easy to become agitated and cranky right now. We will all say and do things that we regret. The good news is that as followers of Jesus, we're in the repentance and forgiveness business. Sprinkle that stuff everywhere.

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I have been asked when I will be coming back to Bloomington. The most honest answer I can give is that I don't know. I find myself as one of the vulnerable right now. Given my age, asthma and allergies, I am in the high-risk category and need to be as physically isolated as possible. For the time being it is much easier for me to do that in Minnesota (besides the fact that my allergies are so much better up here). I long to be with you but I can't be with you right now, for a while.

When asked how long we will have to live this way, Dr. Fauci said, "You don't make the timeline, the virus makes the timeline." I will be back with you when it is safe for me to be with you.

The good news in all of this is that I can be just as present with you from here as I could be from there. I hope to talk at least one member from each household during the next couple of weeks and I am available to you at any time. While I would suggest that you use email or messaging (text or Facebook Messenger) if the matter is not urgent, please do not hesitate to call me if it is urgent. I also intend to do at least a couple of Fireside Chats (with Oliver!) each week in

addition to my sermons on Sundays (and a couple of other times during Holy Week).

I hunger and thirst for the day when we can gather again as the church. Until then, my friends, let us be kind to each other and look for opportunities to be a blessing to all.

Peace and all good,

Pastor Darby

Worship Services

I hope everyone with internet access has been able to watch the recorded Sunday worship services put together by our staff with technical assistance from Josh Ratzburg, Adam Carroll, and Dean Arnold.

The Sunday services as well as Wednesday Lenten meditations are available via links on our website and also through our Facebook page. On our website look for "Videos for Worshipping in Place" on the right hand side column.

Planning for Palm Sunday and Holy Week and Easter services is underway!



Offerings may be mailed to the church or you may utilize the app called "Tithe.ly" that can be accessed via the green "Give" button on our website.

Lent and Holy Week Worship Services—available online

- April 1 (Midweek 5)
- April 5 Palm Sunday
- April 9 Maundy Thursday
- April 10 Good Friday
- April 12 Easter

The church building remains closed to members and visitors through the month of April.

Mission & Ministry News

Quick update from Slovakia:

Hello, faith family.

How much can change in a month or two? When we're speaking of the spread and measures to slow the spread of COVID-19, the situation changes hourly and sometimes more often.

You might be interested in what's happening in our corner of Europe. While parts of Europe have been hit very hard with the virus, Slovakia has been very proactive. The first case in this country of 5.5 million was on Friday, March 9. On Monday, schools in Bratislava were closed and by Thursday, most public places, including the international borders, were closed with strict fines for those breaking quarantine within 14 days upon return to the country. Our school's dormitory has become a state-sponsored quarantine site. Masks and gloves are required on public transportation and recommended in shops, and playgrounds are roped off.

ELCA Global Mission has encouraged all missionaries to return to the US, but with the exception of one teacher, everyone in the Central Europe Teachers program decided to stay. Two and a half weeks after the first case (March 23), the count is only up to 186 with 7 recovered. With this hopefully flattening curve, the prediction is that cases will peak in May or June. If you're interested in more information, I've found the English-language Slovak newspaper to be quite informative: <https://spectator.sme.sk/t/8282/coronavirus>

Like some of you, our daily life primarily consists of trying to work while keeping the kids entertained and trying not to share our germs. Distance teaching is not what we signed up for, but we're doing our best to stay connected with our students and encouraging each other in this time of physical distancing. We're also going outside regularly and wishing we had a little more unlocked green space within easy walking distance.

Big virtual hugs and lots of prayers as we watch history unfold.

The Sveholms

Nick and Naomi are teaching in Slovakia with the kids as representatives of ELCA's Global Mission program. They've asked the people of St. Thomas to contribute towards their continuing transportation, and child care expenses; if you'd like to contribute, just mark SVEHOLM on the memo line of your check to St. Thomas.



Prayer Chain



Want to join our St Thomas email prayer chain? Do you have prayer requests? Contact Susan Colston for further information.



New Hope for Families

(the only family emergency housing recovery agency for whole families in the greater Monroe County area):

Below is a statement issued by Emily Pike, Executive Director of New Hope for Families, to reassure their clients and their community partners that the important work of New Hope for Families will go on, even in this difficult time.

Dear friends:

As we work through these anxious times, many of you have asked about how New Hope will respond to the current public health crisis.

At this time, we have no intention of suspending shelter services for families, even temporarily. We are working with help from our local public health authorities and recommendations from the CDC to make our space as safe as possible for our residents. We will continue to offer child care to working families as long as it is safe to do so.

In times like these, it is more important than ever that we show up for the most vulnerable in our community, and that is what we intend to do. We are so grateful to all of the individuals and businesses who make that possible and to all of you who have reached out to offer support.

If you are looking for a way to help, New Hope and many other service providers are accepting donations of over-the-counter cold and flu medication, children or adult fever reducer/pain reliever, toilet paper, facial tissues, and cleaning supplies, as well as Kroger gift cards so families can afford to stock up on groceries. If you would like to help with these needs, please reach out to our office by calling 812-334-9840 or by email to office@newhope4families.org.

It is our hope that New Hope can be a source of safety and calm for children and families through this concerning time. Thank you for standing for families with us.

Emily Pike

Executive Director, New Hope for Families

Since this statement was issued, New Hope for Families has updated their immediate needs to include the following:

- Toilet paper
- Diapers (sizes 3 and up) and/or Pull-ups (any size)
- Baby Wipes (unscented)
- Infant formula (contact us for specifics)
- Hand soap
- Disinfecting wipes
- Adult fever reducer/pain reliever
- Children's fever reducer/pain reliever
- Adult cold/flu medicine
- Children's cold/flu medicine
- Non-perishable food
- Kroger gift cards for all of the above

Since the St. Thomas building remains locked, please call Kim at to arrange pick up for your donated items. If you would prefer to leave your donated items on your front porch, just let her know. Thank you for your prayers and generosity in supporting New Hope for Families as they strive daily to move families in our community from homelessness to stability.

Looking ahead to May, in hope

Coronavirus or not, spring is here! Daffodils and magnolias are in bloom, and the dogwoods and redbuds won't be far behind. It's time to rake away the debris of winter, plant seeds, divide those botanical overachievers (black-eyed Susans, Siberian irises), and figure out what to do with overeager volunteers (rose campion, columbine). And gardening is the perfect way to get some exercise and stay sane while social distancing!



No one can yet predict where we'll be with the covid-19 lockdown by mid-May, but we live in hope. Please mark your calendars—in pencil if you must—for the annual ECHO sale on May 10 and 17. As always, we welcome donations of non-invasive annuals and perennials, vegetable and herb starts, trees, houseplants, and bulbs. All proceeds go to ECHO to fight world hunger through agricultural research and training.



Vision

Honoring God by empowering the undernourished with sustainable hunger solutions

Mission

Following Jesus by reducing hunger and improving lives worldwide through partnerships that equip people with agricultural resources and skills.

Christian Education

Sunday School Families, feel free to use the many free resources that are being provided to continue your faith formation activities as a family at home! Here are two good resources:

<https://iksynod.org/2020/03/28/sunday-school-home-march-29-2020/>

<https://www.forma.church/faith-at-home/>

If you have any questions or need further support, please feel free to email Amy!

Youth Group



We are having weekly Zoom meetings on Fridays to catch up with and support one another! Watch for emails from Amy with the next meeting link. Do you suspect that Amy doesn't have your email? Email her. Join us!



Brainstorm fundraising ideas!

High School Youth: Since we won't be able to have Easter Breakfast this year, which is a major fundraiser for the Youth Gathering in 2021, let's come up with ideas to raise funds and connect with the congregation! Maybe a virtual talent show? Email Amy with your ideas!



PALM SUNDAY UPDATE: We invite you to participate in Palm Sunday with palms of your very own! Starting Friday after 5:00 we will have palm fronds outside of the front door to the church that we invite you to pick up. If you'd rather, you can also use a substitute for palm leaves from your own home - feel free to be creative! Wave your palms in whatever form with us during our Virtual Palm Sunday service!