

Coronavirus Update for Prince of Peace (Sent in email on 3/17/2020)

To the dear saints at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church:

Peace be with you this day! I am writing to inform you about our plan at Prince of Peace going forward in light of recent events and state mandates.

1. As you probably know, Governor Evers today signed an executive order banning all gatherings of ten or more people. This included worship services and gatherings.

The actual Executive Order reads like so.

"This order may include, but is not limited to mass gatherings at: public or private schools, auditoriums, theaters, movie theaters, museums, stadiums, arenas, conference rooms, meeting halls, exhibition centers, taverns, health and fitness centers, recreation centers, licensed pools, places of worship and religious gatherings."

It also says in the order, "violation or obstruction of this order is punishable by imprisonment, fines, or both. Wis. Stat. 252.25."

President Wille, the President of our District, sent a letter to all of us as pastor's listing this statute.

252.02 Powers and duties of department

(3) The department may close schools and forbid public gatherings in schools, churches, and other places to control outbreaks and epidemics

252.25 Violation of law relating to health. Any person who willfully violates or obstructs the execution of any state statute or rule, county, city or village ordinance or departmental order under this chapter and relating to the public health, for which no other penalty is prescribed, shall be imprisoned for not more than 30 days or fined not more than \$500 or both."

I am not including this to cause alarm, but to say that given this order, we have decided to not hold worship services as normal at least for a few weeks.

We have decided to cancel the Lent services and meals. I will post my Lent sermon online for you to view, hopefully by tomorrow.

Regarding weekend worship, what I have decided to do as your pastor is to have the church open from 3-6 p.m. Saturday and from 8-12:00 p.m. Sunday morning. If you feel the desire to still worship this weekend with communion, I ask that you contact me at **262-977-5077** and sign up for a half hour time slot. Once that time slot is full, you will have to sign up for another time slot. DO NOT feel obligated to attend these services if you feel strongly that we shouldn't be meeting with one another. We are going to record the service this week and try to have it available on our website by Saturday or Sunday at the latest if we can. Our website again is www.princeofpeaceracine.com. It will also be on our Facebook page to view. If you need assistance in viewing these things, please let me know.

Here is how the time slots will work. Saturday-3-3:30, 3:30-4:00, 4:00-4:30, 4:30-5:00, 5:00-5:30, & 5:30-6:00p.m. Sunday-8:00-8:30, 8:30-9:00, 9:00-9:30, 9:30-10:00, 10:00-10:30, 10:30-11:00, 11:00-11:30, 11:30-12:00.

The service will consist of a Hymn, Confession & Absolution, Scripture reading, Message, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, Words of Institution & distribution, Closing Prayer and Benediction. It is what I normally do for our shut-ins.

2. Now I know there will be some of you that bristle over this news. You might ask whether this is an occasion where we must obey God rather than men. Let me try to explain why we hesitate to apply that verse to this situation.

The context of that verse from Acts 5:29 is when the Pharisees ordered the disciples to stop preaching about Christ. This was to prevent the proclamation of the Gospel. If the government ever ordered such a thing for us as the Christian church, we would have to disobey that order and continue to worship and proclaim the Gospel at the risk of imprisonment. In this case, the Gospel can still go out but through the means of the Internet. You will have the opportunity to hear the Word of God this weekend from Prince of Peace and participate in our online service, just not through your physical presence.

Also, we must also remember the verses in the Bible where it tells us to obey the governing authorities because they have been established by God.

Romans 13:1 says, **"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For this is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."** Just to be clear the apostle Paul is not necessarily speaking about the individuals in government, but the government structure which He uses for His purposes to maintain order and protect us as His people.

In addition, you have the verses from I Peter 2:13-17-**"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ...Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."** Peter wrote that during a time of persecution. Governments have their purpose under God.

Therefore, in honor of those verses and in light of the difference in this situation, we need to obey the governing authorities on this because they are trying to protect the public. This is where, for the sake of our neighbor, we must heed the voice of those governing authorities. If they order a complete shut-down of all gatherings, we will comply, knowing it is only temporarily and for the good of our nation. We do this continuing to be in prayer for our nation and its leaders, as well as our medical staff and all those infected. We can do this from home.

Martin Luther encouraged this during the time of the plague in Wittenberg when he wrote, "Shun persons and places wherever your neighbor does not need your presence or has recovered, and act like a man who wants to help put out the burning city. What else is the epidemic but a fire which instead of consuming wood and straw devours life and body? You ought to think this way: "Very well, by God's decree the enemy has sent us poison and deadly offal. Therefore, I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then, I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence."-Luther's Works Vol. 43 p. 131-132.

3. Also, I encourage you to read your Bible devotionally during this time and have family devotions and prayer. Feel free to tune in together as a family to follow along with the recorded service. We will show the screens as Diane plays, so you can sing along at home. I know this means if we are shut down that you will not receive the Sacrament of the Altar perhaps for a time, but I would be willing to go to necessary measures to make sure you receive it. Call me and we will set something up.

4. This also means we will not be holding Bible studies at church at this time, but my expectation is to put my Bible study on "The Passion Accounts" of the Gospel of Luke online for you to view through our website.

5. Another consideration. I know this is a very difficult time for many of you with work stoppages and the stock market crash, but I hope you will continue to consider giving your tithe to the church. If you feel like you can't give as much, it is fine. Let the Lord direct you, but please consider giving what you can. We still have ministry to carry out through this. You can either mail

in your offering or you can sign up for Joyful Response at this time. Go to <https://lcef.org/joyful-response/>. We also have forms you can fill out at church if you would like to stop by.

6. If any of you need spiritual care, such as in-home visitation or hospital visits if allowed or just need to talk or have a prayer, please contact me or your elder. We included the Elder zone list with this email in attachment.

7. Also, we will be forwarding an email to all of you from one of our members who works for a company called PURE, which sells products to boost immune systems as well as sanitation products. We have signed up for it as the church and any purchases you make through it will benefit the church, as a certain percentage of your purchases are donated back to Prince of Peace.

8. Last week's sermon and service is up on our church Facebook page for anyone to view. My sermon will be on the website by later today.

9. Finally, I think it is important in this time to count our blessings. We have a good God who has blessed us with family and homes and the necessities of life. We can be thankful for our nation and that we have the food and supplies we need readily available. We can be thankful this is not adversely affecting children, and we give thanks for the medical professionals we have and their wisdom. As it says in I Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

I leave you with these words of encouragement from God's Word, "ESV **Isaiah 43:1** But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Praying for God's protection, strength, and peace to be with you,

Pastor Chris Lockie
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