



## Emmaus Lutheran Church

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Dear Emmaus family and friends,

This email comes to you along with my continued prayers for you and for the many needs that have become a part of our everyday lives since the middle of March. All of these things are well in God's hands and we can trust that God will provide what we need to see through to the other side of this pandemic.

We continue to upload sermons and music each week on our church's Facebook page and on YouTube. You can access the YouTube videos by going to our website: **Emmaus-lutheran.org** and then follow the link at the top of the page. Sermons (and possibly entire services) will continue to be offered on-line even after the church is fully opened. Thank you for watching.

The Congregation Council has been meeting via Zoom conferencing to plan and prepare for the time when we may return to church to worship together. We are being cautious on your behalf. We do not want to hurry through this time and make mistakes that may have serious consequences. Please bear with us as we do the very best we can in reopening our church for worship, meetings and fellowship.

Bishop Pedro Suarez has recommended that we do not reopen for worship and meetings until we are at phase 3 in our area. Considering the age of many of our members and the compromising medical conditions that many have to deal with, I am in agreement with our bishop. Bishop Suarez has also recommended that we consider this a time of a Eucharistic fast (i.e. refraining from worshipping with Holy Communion). There are many factors – theological, ecumenical, practical and even financial factors – that contribute to this decision. Our bishop does not sanction practices of virtual

communion, but neither will he punish congregations who adopt such practices. I may make a different decision later, but this is how it stands at this point.

At the time of this writing we have no plan to reopen our doors for worship. However, we are planning to record the weekly sermon in front of a live congregation. Here's how we're going to do it:

- Sunday, June 14 @ 9 a.m.
- Members/guests will drive to church and remain in their cars
- Please stay at home if you are not feeling well
- We will broadcast the sermon over a loudspeaker and record it to be uploaded that day
- All will remain in their car
- Physical distancing (i.e. social distancing) will be strictly practiced
- Communion will not be offered

The recommendations of the medical experts and the status of COVID-19 in our community are being reevaluated regularly and the final decision to reopen or not will be communicated to the congregation via email blast and our church's website. Our insurance has informed us that we are only covered as we follow local, state, national and CDC guidelines for reopening – whichever is the strictest of the guidelines. Any other situation for reopening will leave us without insurance coverage should anyone become sick after attending worship at Emmaus.

The Emmaus Preschool is making decisions for themselves based on specific information and guidelines they must follow. As of today, they have announced a reopening date of Monday, June 8. Unfortunately, the building will not be open for other groups, meetings or events at this time.

I invite you to pray fervently and know that you are being prayed for each day. God be with you until we meet again.

Grace upon grace,  
Pastor Mark Winkler