



An Update for our St. Luke's Family

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me."

- John 14:1 NIV

Dear brother and sisters in Jesus,

The last few days have certainly been crazy! Things have been changing fast as health experts and leaders have been trying to get a handle on how best to slow the spread of COVID-19. First, we were told to limit our gatherings to fewer than 250 people, then it quickly became 50, then less than 10!

For this reason, the leadership of St. Luke's has decided to **cancel public worship at least through the end of March**. This certainly was not an easy decision. It is a joy to gather together in worship to listen to our Savior's voice, confess our sins and hear God's word of forgiveness, sing hymns of praise, receive the Lord's Supper, and hear God's blessing. St. Luke's is a congregation that loves to greet and encourage one another in the faith. However, we believe that by keeping our distance at this critical point, we may help slow the initial spread of this virus.

I assure you that this decision was not driven by fear, but love. There may be many things that cause us to live in fear right now: the health of a loved one, our own health, lost wages, a failing economy, etc. However, the Apostle John assures us that "perfect love drives out all fear" (1 John 4:18). He's not talking about *our* perfect love, but the perfect love that Jesus has for all people.

You know this love. It's the love that drove our Savior to the cross, so that we would not have to fear condemnation from God. It's this love that removes the things we most needed to fear like sin and death. When worry, anxiety, and fear begin to creep up in your heart and mind, return to the calming words of your Savior, who says, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me."* Everything is going to be ok.

Jesus loved us first and best and took away our greatest reason for fear. This is what frees us to live and love others, even in times of crisis. We trust that the Lord of the Church will use even this to bless us and bring glory to his name. Who knows? Perhaps, God will give you unique opportunities to share the One who gives you peace in the face of fear with a friend or family member.

While in-person worship is cancelled, we will strive to serve you with the Gospel in these alternative ways:

1. **Every Saturday and Tuesday evening a worship service** or devotion will be uploaded to YouTube (Search "St. Luke's Watertown") or follow the link on our St. Luke's Watertown Facebook page each week. The hymns and order of worship will be on the screen. (Many families are "casting" the service to their TV, so that everyone can watch together.) Our recommendation is that you view these services with your family or group on Sunday mornings, or Wednesday afternoon/evenings, at the same time you would normally worship. *If you do not have access to the internet please call Karen (920) 261-2120, so that we*

can send you materials for spiritual growth during this time. Also, if we do not have a current email for you, please email stlukewttn@tslwels.org

2. We will also plan on posting **short devotions and announcements on our Facebook** page from time to time.
3. We are working on a plan to allow for families or very small groups to come for **Holy Communion** in the near future, especially if restrictions continue.
4. If you, or someone you know is high risk and should not be going out to get groceries or **running errands**, please call the church office. We have volunteers who would be more than happy to help with these things.
5. As always, Pastor Cloute is available for private visits and devotions: (920) 261-2120 ext. 3

Again, Jesus has loved us in perfect way and driven out all fear. It's his love that moves us to look to the needs of others. Fred Rogers (from *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*) once famously said his mother always told him in times of tragedy to "look for the helpers because there you'll find hope." Let's be helpers and beacons of hope in the midst of fear and possibly prolonged isolation. Pray for those in need. If you are able to help others in some way, do so. Pick up the phone and give those who might be isolated and alone a call. Be generous with your time, your resources, and your patience. Support your local community and your church as you are able, and remember the words of Jesus you said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

May Jesus bless you and keep you safe and healthy,



Pastor Justin Cloute