



OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH

A MISSOURI SYNOD CONGREGATION

Dear Saints,

Take Heart, your Good Shepherd will not leave you or forsake you.

I hope that you've had a chance to tune into a few of our Divine Services this week or to watch the sermons that we've posted on YouTube and our Facebook page. The sermons have been outstanding and filled with comfort. Pastor Fleming's sermon on Romans 3 proclaiming that what we need now is mercy was so powerful. His Thursday night sermon concentrated on the Suffering Servant, Christ Jesus who comes to shepherd us. We also heard today that in spite of what we are going through, we can be confident that the Lord will never leave us or forsake us. He has given us His promises in Holy Baptism, the Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. As one of our members noted from her self-quarantine "through my baptism I am God's child" later she noted that the love poured out upon her as God's child includes Christ's forgiveness. We can take heart in the mercy of our God in gray and latter days, and we can have confidence that He will see us through all of these changes.

Thank you for your prayers.

Times such as these can bring about tremendous attacks of the devil upon the preaching of God's Word, the body of Christ, and our leaders inside and outside the church. Your prayers for us are such a blessing!

Pray for your pastors: that the Lord would strengthen us so that we can stand firm and continue providing you with the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Pray for the body of Christ. It is easy to become short tempered, discontent, and angry with one another as we spend more time together, as anxiety increases, and as we are overloaded by information especially through social media. The devil would have us quickly nipping at one another-doing his work for him of damaging the faith of our brothers and sisters in Christ. So, pray for each other: that we would be given patience, love to cover a multitude of sins, forgiveness so that we forgive as we've been forgiven in Christ Jesus.

Finally pray for our leaders inside and outside of the church. Inside the church they have much organization to accomplish providing mercy and care to those suffering in the body of Christ. Outside the church, our president, our governor, our mayor—they *all* need our prayers. So please pray

- That they would be given an extra measure of wisdom as they lead
- That they are given strength and endurance as they guide us through these difficult days
- That they are able to work together
- That they would avoid bickering, backbiting, and blaming
- That this would lead to greater unity instead of division.

Thank you for your patience.

We have undergone a number of changes this week. Please note the following:

- To follow the state's mandate and the CDC's guidance on group size, we are now signing up for the Divine Service using Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/our-savior-lutheran-church-17688112092>
- Please enter the church using the center narthex door.
- On entering the church, please wash your hands. A service folder or bulletin will be available for you for the entire Divine Service.
- When coming up for the Lord's Supper, please use hand sanitizer.
- When receiving our Lord's body, hold out your hand. This was the recommendation of several health care professionals.

- We are using a purificator that is soaked with Everclear to wipe the lip of the chalice. This is done specifically to cleanse the outer rim of the chalice.
- After receiving the Common Cup, please use hand sanitizer or wash your hands. Hand to mouth, nose, or eye contact is the most likely way to catch Covid-19.
- During this extraordinary time of pandemic, we will also offer individual chalices. Regardless of whether you use the common cup or individual chalices, it is Christ's blood under the wine shed for the forgiveness of your sins. If you use one, please carefully pick up the individual chalice using your pincer grip while trying to avoid touching the other chalices. When you have finished, place the cup on the altar rail. Please note: the same risk of hand to mouth, nose or eye contact exists with individual chalices, so please use hand sanitizer after the Lord's Supper.
- Place your bulletin into one of the conveniently located blue recycling bins following the service or take it home with you. We've printed enough for the week so we won't need to reuse them.

Are there any other changes?

- We are now livestreaming *all* of our Divine Services throughout the week. They can be found on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/oursaviorggr/>
- A different text is assigned each day so the sermons are always new. The sermons can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQspLcuMMYT9AwFJbnAE81A/>
- We've also included additional hymns and the litany in the bulletin to allow for greater flexibility throughout the week.
- The bulletin will not include a calendar or announcements at this time. We are looking for ways to communicate necessary information especially prayer requests and calendar information over the coming weeks.
- Hymnals are available for your home devotional use. Please grab one from the center narthex and return it after the current restrictions are lifted.
- Meetings and other activities at the church are cancelled until further notice.

Please continue to follow the Common Sense Precautions given by the Health Department.

- Stay home if you are showing signs of illness. Your pastors will come to you with Word and Sacrament. Please call us and let us know you'd like a visit!
- Practice good hygiene. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid shaking hands.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- As much as possible, maintain a social distance of six feet.

Finally dear saints, thank you for your words of encouragement. We haven't had an easy seven days, but the Lord is using all of this for our good. This Sunday is Laetare-Rejoice Sunday. And we can rejoice even in these sufferings, "knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:3-5). What a blessed hope we have secured for us through Christ's death and resurrection!

In Christ,

Jeremy M. Swem

Pastor Swem