

Dear _____ Family,

It's unsettling that the early days of Lent have overlapped with the emergence of the coronavirus here in the United States. Like many of you, I have been following news reports and reading reliable sources for the latest information. One particularly good source is the Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

For now we will continue to gather for worship and other activities, taking appropriate precautions. We'll exchange the peace without shaking hands. We'll greet each other at other times without touching. I always use hand sanitizer before the distribution of communion. Lutheran theology holds that you have received the sacrament of Holy Communion by taking either the wafer *or* the wine/grape juice. So if you'd prefer not to do intinction (dipping the wafer into the chalice of wine or grape juice), you can just eat the wafer.

Jesus reminds us that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love our neighbor. One way to love our neighbor is to do what we can to prevent the spread of this virus. That means doing all the things you've been hearing on the news. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently. Avoid touching your face. If you are feeling sick or are medically vulnerable in some way, please stay home. Even if you are feeling fine, now is a good time to limit your travel and movement in the community.

We started Lent on Ash Wednesday with a reminder of our mortality, a fragility that feels especially true in this moment. We also remembered that we are held by God in life and in death. Even in the midst of fear and uncertainty, there are opportunities to bear witness to God's love and grace. As L. Roger Owens wrote recently in *The Christian Century*:

That grace frees us to ask, *What does this moment—this reality—require of me?* For some the duty will be—indeed already is—to exist as patiently and lovingly as possible in quarantine. For others it will be to show up, sacrifice the inclination to self-preservation, and care for the sick. For many, the moment calls for listening to experts and preparing thoughtfully, making sure there's enough hand soap, peanut butter, and Cheez-Its on hand to endure a governmentally imposed staycation. But in the midst of that work, the duty of the moment calls for something else as well: loving reality, even in its vulnerability. Especially in its vulnerability.

The Church Council and I will continue to monitor developments and make decisions about our life together. Keep an eye on our website ([insert church website](#)), our Facebook page, and your e-mail for updates.

I trust each of you to make appropriate decisions regarding your own health and safety. Please reach out to me if it would help to talk about this situation. We're learning new details all the time, and fear is a natural response. Together we will pray and persist, trusting that God is with us always and remains the ultimate source of our hope.

Love in Christ,
Pastor _____

Source: https://www.christiancentury.org/blog-post/guest-post/can-lent-help-prepare-us-pandemic?fbclid=IwAR0nv9AYU_smG-K-tX6dgzcewm27a-OUrv7oJRG_xzZo39WeMqXPhFxC3Dk