

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Dear Grace Families

Given the constantly evolving recommendations from the CDC, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Governor of Michigan and the President of the United States we feel it is an act of love on our part for our congregation and community to temporarily close our doors and suspend worship services and other in-person group activities. This will remain the case through **Wednesday, April 1, 2020**. The Elders and Pastors will reconvene that week to discuss the decisions for Sunday, April 5, 2020, and going forward.

In the meantime, this doesn't mean our ministry or the work of our wonderful congregation will cease. Our work is just beginning. This is an unprecedented moment in history and time for us as brothers and sisters in Christ to step up. This is a moment for us to stir one another up with love and good works. This is a time to share peace and comfort with one another.

In this time of our temporary dispersion I encourage you to be ever more mindful of your daily vocations in this life. Whether you are a father or mother, husband or wife, neighbor or worker in the community, be the best that you can be in that vocation living out the love of Christ to make a difference in the days ahead. Spend time together in God's Word and prayer, continue to love one another meeting the needs of those around you. Remember, even though we may not be able to meet face-to-face for the time being, we do not cease to be the Body of Christ, a City on a Hill, a shining light in the darkness of the world.

So, here's the breakdown of what to expect over the next two weeks. If you're not able to get online, we implore you to reach out to your neighbors. Also, don't hesitate to be in contact with the pastors for more personalized ministry.

- The next two Sundays and Wednesdays will have online video worship. The Pastors will record an abbreviated worship service with the Word of God preached. These videos will appear on YouTube and Facebook.
- We are exploring a video conference Bible Study where members could log in and participate with a computer or smartphone. More information still to come on the timing and technology involved.
- The Pastors are always available via phone to talk and pray. Over the next week we would also like to make available the possibility to receive private confession, worship, communion with the Pastors via appointment.
- The church building is closed to all current activities and groups. The office staff will continue to monitor the phone so people can stay connected.

We know many are disappointed by the closure of the church and rest assured your pastors are right there with you. We understand and even support the need to close but we don't like that any more than you do. Let us join in prayer that this is only temporary and let us with delightful joy look forward to that day when we'll be back together again.

As we move forward into these uncharted waters, I ask you to keep Grace in mind with your generous stewardship. We have always had a wonderfully giving and caring congregation and the ministry needs won't cease even during this hardship.

Even though we won't be able to gather and share our offerings in person you are welcome to send contributions in through the mail. You can also hold them until such time we are able to meet again and then share them at that joyful date.

I want to leave you with some positive and enriching thoughts and verses to keep you through the days ahead. The first is a quote from Rev. Bill Cwirla, pastor in Hacienda Heights, CA. He writes "We have gathered as the Body of Christ. We have received the Body of Christ. Now in our scattering, let us be the Body of Christ and seek Christ in our neighbor to serve Him."

I also love to share the ending of Psalm 46 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. (Ps. 46:10-11)"

And finally, I'll share my beloved confirmation verse from Psalm 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Please help us help you in staying connected during this time, and as a reminder here are the ways to do so:

Church Phone: (734) 242-1401

Church Website: www.gracelutheranmonroe.org

Church Facebook: www.facebook.com/gracemonroemi

Church YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/GraceMonroeYoutube>

God's blessings,

Pastor Mark Witte