



Living in God's
Amazing Grace

Bethany Lutheran Church

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March 16, 2020

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We live in uncertain times with things changing daily, if not by the hour or minute as a result of the worldwide pandemic spread of COVID-19. The Executive Team and Council have taken this seriously and worked diligently to take precautionary measures based on the information and recommendations from local, state and national levels of government elected officials, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Iowa Department of Public Health.

Last night the CDC recommended that for the next 8 weeks in-person events of 50 people or more be cancelled or postponed throughout the United States. With this latest development, through thoughtful prayer and consideration, Bethany leadership have decided to cancel **all** church activities through the end of this month. No outside groups, regardless of size, will be permitted to use the building. Pastor Chad will refrain from any in-person pastoral visits as those tend to be with our most vulnerable members. The exception would be in an emergency, and then subject to policies and limitations that may be in place by nursing homes, hospitals, etc. Staff will continue to be compensated during this time.

Council will continue to monitor the situation and meet March 29th or 30th to reevaluate and make decisions on how we best move forward. In the meantime, we can care for the financial health of the congregation by mailing offerings or giving online.

We will continue to do our best to communicate with you. Pastor Chad's sermons will be posted to our website as well as be emailed. He will also be preparing a short daily devotion, which will be sent out. We will research other means, which may help facilitate communication during this time of "social distancing."

In the meantime, the sanctuary will remain open Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. for personal prayer. If you are experiencing any flu-like symptoms we please ask you stay home. Pastor Chad will be available via phone for pastoral care, prayer, or questions and concerns. Please contact the church office at 319-643-5998 or his cell 515-249-8071.

This decision was not made easily or lightly; however, at this time we feel it best to err on the side of caution. Ultimately, this decision is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ and his command found in each of the 4 gospels to "love our neighbor." We will get through this. God's love will embrace us, and Jesus' presence will guide our every step. While we may be separated, make no mistake we are together through our baptismal connection to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

A colleague reminded me of the words of the refrain from *My Life Flows on in Endless Song* (ELW 763) that are encouragement during these times:

*No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that Rock I'm clinging
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth
How can I keep from singing?*

For the sake of all people and the whole of creation brought to being by the God of life, we will continue to sing and pray. Our prayers are with you and your loved ones faithful servants.

Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Chad and the Bethany Council