

Dear Shepherd Family,

We are all well aware of the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The leadership team at Shepherd has been paying close attention to what is going on, and we have been in contact with medical experts and the county health workers. We have developed a congregational response plan with two stages. **In light of the current recommendation from the Minnesota Dept of Health we are taking these steps to ensure that we are participating in the limitation of the spread of this virus. Here are the current steps we are taking:**

As of this Sunday (3/15) we will be implementing the following:

- We will suspend all serving of food (Yes, including Communion, Wed Soup Supper & donuts. Sorry.)
- We will suspend all church gatherings and meetings (committee meetings, all programming, Bible studies, music rehearsals etc.) other than Sunday and Wednesday worship beginning today and running through this coming week. We will reassess mid-week this next week.
- We will provide online worship for those who choose to stay home (and if you are sick PLEASE stay home!).

We will then reassess early this next week and if necessary for the health of our community we will:

- Suspend all worship
- Provide online worship only.
- Cancel any meetings taking place in our Shepherd facility

Throughout this process, we will stay in close contact with the Minnesota and Ramsey County Health Departments. We are also following our ELCA website as new guidelines concerning worship become available https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Worship_in_Times_of_Public_Health_Concerns.pdf?_ga=2.216298902.1056397215.1584107847-956014473.1584107847.

(Note: This document was originally created by Pastor Pam Gompf and Pointe of Grace Lutheran Church in Mulkitto, Washington and edited by us to fit our context.)

Uncertainty creates anxiety. And while we want to be careful to not overreact to what is going on, we also want to be responsible in how we handle this very fluid situation. **One thing is for sure, this is a dynamic, changing situation and we will respond quickly as information becomes available.**

In the short term, we have two requests for you:

1. **Please pray.** Pray for those affected by this virus. Pray for the young and the vulnerable. Pray for the overwhelmed medical system and professionals who tend and care for them. Pray for those who are affected by this health crisis economically. And please pray for health and well-being for all of God's people.
2. **Don't be afraid.** This is an anxious time for our whole nation. At times like this, we lean in to the promises of God. God tells us, "Do not be afraid!" We always rely on the foundation of God's love and grace. God promises to walk through this with us. Rely on that promise.

If you have any thoughts or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

God's peace and blessings!

Your Shepherd Staff and Governing Board

PS – Now go wash your hands 😊