



# TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

*The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*

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*The Reverend Peter A. Schiebel, Pastor*

Friday in the Week of Pentecost XXIV

November 20, 2020

Dear Trinity Family,

My hope and prayer is that this message reaches you all and finds all of us in good health, joyful mind, and blessed by the peace of Christ which dwells in our hearts.

Yet, even as I write those words, even though I believe them and want them to be true, I am also certain that you also are watching and hearing the same news that I have been. It is disheartening, yet not all that surprising or unexpected, that we find our nation and world in the midst of the “second wave” of this Coronavirus pandemic. With its reemergence, many of the precautionary orders we found ourselves living under last spring have also returned, placing us again into a time of uncertainty, of unease, of frustration and impatience, and also of fear for ourselves, our loved ones, and even for the future.

With all of that in mind, it does seem perhaps that my well wishes at the opening of this message seem out of place and contradicted by the reality of the life and world we find ourselves in. Yet, there is hope for us, even in these trying times, and it is to be found in the last part of my greeting: the peace of Christ. I ask all of us to take to heart our Savior’s words from the Upper Room on the night before His Passion began, where He lovingly spoke to His disciples and to us: “I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

In this time, let us find our comfort in God and the certainty we have in knowing that He is with us. Again, I am reminded of the hymn we sang last Reformation Sunday, repeating God’s own precious promise to us, His people, from Psalm 46:

*I AM forever WHO I AM.*

*Above you, beneath you, around you, and within you.*

*Be still and know that I AM God.*

May all of us trust in the God who is in us and with us always as our safe shelter and fortress and through whom in Christ we have life, victory, and peace now and forever.

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Now on to news and updates about our life together in these days.

## **Worship**

### ***Sunday Services***

We are doing our best to keep informed of the orders that are coming from our state and county governments regarding limits on gatherings and working our best to comply with them while still providing for our spiritual needs.

Our intention and hope is to remain open for in person worship on Sundays as long as we are able. Again, our small size has been a blessing which has allowed us to worship together “live”. What is unknown is if or when changes to government orders will make this impossible to continue. We pray that things can remain “as is”, but realize that much of this is out of our control as we also want to be good citizens and neighbors.

While we are able to continue to worship together in the church building, we do kindly ask you to continue to follow the “Stay Safe Rules”. It is a good thing to know that since we have been worshipping in person that we have had no reports of any of our members falling ill to COVID. Thank you all for your taking the precautions we have asked and for just looking out for one another’s well-being.

If there should be changes that we have to make because of new orders and restrictions, we will let you know what those are as soon as we can. Even though we may not want to go back to the way things were for us last spring with “virtual church”, at least we do have that option, and we will continue to worship the Lord and love and serve one another as best we can in this situation.

### ***Holiday Services***

For Thanksgiving, we will not hold an in-person worship service at Trinity. Pastor does plan to use the Midweek Devotions and Bible Study on November 25<sup>th</sup>, which is Thanksgiving Eve, as a “Thanksgiving moment”, with the prayers and study/message centered on the theme of thanks. The devotions that day will be livestreamed on Facebook Live at 4:00 PM, and the video will be available to view at anytime after that from the video archive on our church Facebook Page.

As for Christmas, our hope, plan, and intention is to hold in-person worship services as we normally have:

Christmas Eve at 7:00 PM

Christmas Day at 9:30 AM

Of course this is all subject to possible change should local health conditions require restrictions. We will do our best to “have Christmas” as the situation allows us to. Should we be able to keep open as we are currently, we may ask members to “announce their attendance” for these services, especially Christmas Eve, just so we know we can stay within the required limits. More information will be coming to you as the day comes closer.

### ***Advent Devotions***

As we have in the past, devotional materials will be provided to our Trinity Family to help you “keep Advent at home”. Because someone (your Pastor) let things slip a little and didn’t get everything ordered early, we will be mailing them to you. We hope you should receive them in time to start using them on Advent Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup>.

Just a preview...this year’s theme uses the tradition of the Jesse Tree which takes us through many of the Old Testament Prophecies which promised the Messiah, and which sometimes included making symbol “ornaments” to adorn a tree to remind us of what these promises point us to: Jesus, “the Shoot that comes forth from the stump of Jesse” (Isaiah 11:1). What is also great this year is that the “adult” devotions will match the “children’s” devotions that we send to our families with kids at home, so we’ll all be doing the same thing together.

### **Other News**

#### ***Annual Voters Meeting***

We currently have a Voters Meeting scheduled for Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, following worship. The meeting will be held in the sanctuary to allow for better distancing. Our plan is to allow guests and others to depart at the end of the service, give everyone who is staying for the meeting a time to “stretch”, and to give those leading the meeting a moment to set things up.

The main items on the agenda are the budget for next year and the placing of members on the Ministry Planning Group, as well as other items of congregation business.

If you have any questions or concerns in advance of the meeting, please contact Helen Joynes. If you are unable to attend the meeting, but would like to be brought in virtually, please let us know as we will need to make plans to see if we have the capabilities to make that happen.

#### ***Pastoral Care Calls***

As restrictions on visitations to hospitals and nursing facilities have once more returned, Pastor will be limited on visits that can be made to members who are in these care situations. He will be available as he is able to tend to the spiritual needs of those sick and shut-in, even if it is only by a phone call. If there are any members who do become ill, please do not forget to inform Pastor so he can keep them in prayer and give what spiritual aid he can.

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*And lastly, a personal note*

My thanks to our Trinity Family for their well-wishes, concern, and support for me as I continue to work on my frozen shoulder. Thanks especially for your patience with me for things that may have “fallen through the cracks” because of the added time I have needed for physical therapy. The latest update that I have been given is that measurements show that there has been improvement in some areas, while others still need some work. With that, therapy has been extended to just before Christmas. Your continued prayers are appreciated.

God’s blessings and peace to one and all in these interesting and challenging days. With the Lord’s help, and with one another, we’ll find a way through it all. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you, as I hold you all in this undershepherd’s heart, just as we all are held in the safe and secure arms of our Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus.

In Christ’s love,

+ *Pastor*