



# St. John Lutheran Church

*St. John Lutheran Church comes together to love God and one another, serve others and share God's word. We do these things by God's Grace that comes through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ*

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Sunday Morning Worship at  
9AM  
Sunday school  
10:15AM  
Choir Practice on Mondays  
7PM (Sept-May)

## APRIL 2020

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April 2020

## FROM PASTOR KEVIN

First, let me begin by thanking everyone for all the wonderful things you did for my installation service on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>! Thanks to Carol, Janet, and St. John's choir members for the beautiful song you sang. Thanks to everyone who brought food to the carry-in reception at Trinity. Thanks to Stephanie for the beautiful cake. Thanks to everyone who was able to attend either at St. John or at Trinity. Thanks also to everyone who decided to stay home for health reasons due to the spread of the coronavirus. It was the last face-to-face worship service we were able to have for a while. We join most congregations in the United States and many congregations throughout the world to stem the tide of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic by suspending in-person worship services. Fortunately, Pastor Bob Abrams was able to install me as your pastor just under the wire. Shortly after March 15, Bishop Dillahunt suspended all synod

office staff travel for at least a month. The Southern Ohio Synod assembly was just canceled and congregations, like ours, who sent in money for us to attend have been refunded.

In the meantime, we're doing what we can to continue to bring you God's Word. Who would have thought during the time we interviewed that we would be faced with this challenge? The following words from the apostle Paul are even more poignant than usual in our present time.

**Romans 8:35, 37-39**  
*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all*

*creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

As I write this article, we're coming up on our second Sunday away from in-person worship. Together, the councils of both St. John's and Trinity and I will consult by phone on Monday, 3/30 to decide where we go from there. Given Governor Dewine's "shelter in place" orders, I imagine we are likely to continue to limit our worship activities to what they currently are, to contribute to flattening the curve on the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. I know this saddens us all. I was hoping my first Easter among you would be special in a different way. Our God is faithful. Sadly, we will more than likely be celebrating Easter physically apart from each other. Just like Jesus was the man for others we, who bear his name, must be the "people for others," especially for the people

most vulnerable to this virus. We are, at least, fortunate to be able to communicate and share God's word over the internet and by mail.

The internet is something our ancestors did not have back in 1918 during the Spanish flu pandemic.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Louis did suspend masses for a time to help flatten the curve of the spread of that virus. They suspended worship as part of a widespread measure enacted by the St. Louis City health commissioner, Max Starkloff that helped St. Louis stand alone as a city that actually flattened the curve of exposure and resultant deaths due to the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. I only mention this to show that the measures we're taking as a faith community, as a state and as a nation do indeed have a precedent. You can read more about it if you follow this link on your internet browser.

<https://aleteia.org/2020/03/19/when-was-the-last-time-churches-in-the-u-s-were-closed/>

When it is safe for congregations to gather in person again, Easter is bound to take on a wonderful, unique significance. Fortunately, the Easter season lasts 50 days. The triumphant music, the beautiful

flowers, and the joy of being back together in worship again will be sweet. Notice, I didn't say Easter is bound to be even more special. Easter is always special. Easter is always the celebration of Christ's resurrection and his victory over death.

Another important reminder that this time apart provides is that **we are the church**. Our buildings are beautiful places to gather for worship, but our faith and our God are bigger than any building.

We do keep in mind that our ministry does continue, as does the need to fund it. We are very thankful you are mailing your offerings to both St. John and Trinity. Thank you all so much for your faithfulness in giving!

While we refrain from meeting together physically for worship, we also suspend in-person meetings at our buildings. The decision to suspend worship for St. John's was made over e-mail and One Call Now on Tuesday, March 17. Trinity's council met and decided to suspend worship that same night. We will decide what to do going forward Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>. As I have already indicated, I would be surprised if we decided to resume public worship just yet, although we all

miss it. I ache for the Lord's Supper. As we miss worshiping together, let's dedicate ourselves to reading God's Word at home. Remember the Apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, did so under house arrest much of the time. As challenging as these times are, God's people all over the world have been through more difficult times.

God will bring us through this!

God bless you all!

Your fellow servant of Christ,

Pastor Kevin Scheuller

**"We are the  
Church, no  
matter where  
we meet."**

**2 Corinthians**

**6:16**



## A Devotion in Uncertain Times

We are living in uncertain times. With the onset of the Coronavirus things are changing daily. People fight for basic supplies like food, water and cleaning supplies. Many are separated from loved ones due to fears of catching the virus or because they already have. Some are out of work worried about finances, and social distancing takes us further and further from each other. Our fear far outdistances our need and desire for fellowship and community.

Churches, schools, gyms, clubs, restaurants, community events, libraries and sports have all shut down leaving us socially isolated with only a building fear made more real and unconquerable by the ongoing media reports.

This is a time when we must turn to our faith and remember the Lord who cares for and protects us. Psalms 46:10 (New living translation) tells us “Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every

nation. I will be honored throughout the world”. When we are quiet and focus on the Lord, we can find the inner peace denied us by worldly worries. We can look for the wonders of creation that bear witness to the power of our Lord who created all that is good.

Surely the Lord who created the life given by a desert rain, a flower pushing through the tough and parched caliche soil against all odds, or a sunset splashed across the sky from a painter's palette, can provide all we need in our time of fear and uncertainty.

In Matthew 6: 25-27 Jesus reminds us <sup>25</sup>“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father

feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? <sup>27</sup>“And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?”

So, in these times of trouble, do not worry about hoarding and acquiring more food than we may be able to use but give to those who lack and remember who provided all you have. Whatever we give in love will come back to us in blessings. Let us use this time of self-imposed isolation to take stock of all the blessings we have been given and reflect on the one who provided them.

Hopefully we can all come through this time with a heart full of gratitude and a renewed desire to give to those who need more than we do ourselves. Amen



## Surviving the COVID-19 Pandemic With Your Mental Health Intact

Let's face it: Humans are social beings. Some more than others; but even the most devout introverts require human interaction on a regular basis. The concept of social distancing is not our friend and certainly not our mental health friend! Here are some thoughts

on how to survive the Covid-19 pandemic with your mental health intact.

### Develop a routine

Just like comfort food, routine is the comfort food for the mind. Develop a new routine based on your risk factors

and recommended CDC guidelines. Routine does not mean “rigid.” It does imply a regular series of patterns one might engage in most every day. Slow down your morning and nighttime routines. Maybe add a step or two you have always wished you had the time to take. Be mindful of



*article continued on next page*

your selfcare and relish in it.

### Tackle a project or learn something new

Throughout the remainder of the day, get creative! Make a working list of all those tasks and projects you've been putting off for months and years. Now is a great time to dig into them and possibly spend more time than you originally expected you would be able to. List are also like food to mental health—it feels so good when you cross something off! Our new normal can allow time to learn and perfect that hobby you have been wanting to start forever. Need a lesson? Check out YouTube or have someone verbally walk you through the steps you need.

### Alternate activity types

Plan to alternate sedentary activities with more physically active ones. Vow to get up off the couch after each episode of your binge watching: 10 minutes of activity for every hour of inactivity. You have been told for years the mind, body, and spirit cannot be separated. It's true! Each aspect feeds and enhances the others. Likewise, the mind prefers a variety of engagement. Different areas of the brain are stimulated by different

activities. Keep that in mind when setting up your routine. Switch from primarily visual activities to ones primarily auditory to ones primarily tactile and so forth. Alternate between crossword puzzles and numerical puzzles; between reading and writing letters (remember that skill?); between cooking for enjoyment and playing an instrument. Sing! It has been proven to increase brain chemicals which contribute to a positive mental health.

### Battle anxiety with mindfulness

Addressing anxiety requires persistent mindfulness to constantly challenge the productivity of your "busy brain." Each time you find yourself ruminating on something out of your control, actively and repeatedly remind yourself spending energy processing things beyond your control only drains your ability to remain mentally healthy. Use distraction, activity requiring concentration, and self-talk to calm your anxiety-feeding thoughts.

Additional thoughts for those diagnosed with depression: if you believe your current medication regimen is not maintaining your healthy levels, contact your doctor's office (preferably

without going in!) and discuss the possibility of increasing your dosage or adding an enhancer temporarily until this crisis abates.

### Look outward, not just inward

Think of others! Feelings of depression are lightened by both a sense of accomplishment and a sense of helping others. Going to the grocery store? Check in with an elderly neighbor, relative, or congregational member to see if they need you to pick something up for them. Take precautions when dropping off their order. Write them a letter and mail it or stick it in their mailbox. Rake a yard. Go dance in front of their window. Deliver medication. Make a meal. Sing them a song over the phone. Paint them a picture. Walk their dog. FaceTime. Skype. There are endless possibilities that will help them and help you!



**"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."**

**I Peter: 5-7**

*Information courtesy of Southern Ohio Synod and shared by Jody Passafume a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for 32 years with a Masters' Degree in Counseling. She is a member of Holy Trinity, Columbus, OH.*



## Make a Difference From Afar/ Live Generously

Attention Thrivent members! Join the Thrivent \$1 million online donation challenge. Through June 30, 2020, Thrivent will be providing an extra \$1 for every \$2 donated for the first \$1 million in donations made through [Thrivent.com](http://Thrivent.com).

## Word in Season

The Word in Season Devotionals are located at the back of the sanctuary in the basket on the table.

## Updates From Local Organizations We Support

# Preble County Community Services COVID-19 Updates

Below is a guide to available services within Preble County and how to access them. For more information contact agencies directly.



- Winter Crisis Applications are being processed over the phone, call 937-305-8762.
- DPL and Vectren have suspended disconnections.

### Preble County Council on Aging 937-456-4947

- Decades Diner: Congregate meals and Diner Meals are take out only, call ahead for the Diner, and delivery available in Eaton.
- Home Delivered Meals/Meals on Wheels: Normal status.
- Transportation: Chemotherapy, Dialysis, and Grocery Runs only.
- Activities: Cancelled until further notice.
- Information and Referrals: by appointment only



- Our 24/7 Crisis Hotline and Shelter services are available
- Call 937-456-6891 for the 24/7 Crisis Hotline for all domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, or human trafficking needs.
- The business office is closed to the public

### Preble County Job and Family Services 937-456-6205

- Building is closed to the public.
- Customers are encouraged to apply for benefits online or over the phone.
- Child Support Administrative Hearings will be conducted over the phone.
- Ohio Means Jobs resources are available online.
- Work program requirements for benefits are excused until further notice.

### The Common Good/ Once Around Shop

- Once Around Shop closed to the public.
- Food Assistance available Monday and Friday 1:30-4:00 and Wednesday 9:30-12:30 on a drive thru/walk up basis.



### Closed to the Public

- Only food donations will be accepted.
- Applications available by calling 937-472-0500.
- Homeless Shelter and Food Assistance still available, ring the doorbell or call.



- ALL EVENTS postponed until further notice.
- Office closed to the public; scheduled appointments only.
- Employment opportunities: displaced employees call 937-456-5891
- Client emergency line 937-733-1616.



### PCMHRB 937-456-6827

- Samaritan Behavioral Health 937-456-1915, TASC 937-456-3443, and Gebhart Counseling Solutions 937-456-2805 available by phone.
- Cherry Street Clubhouse is CLOSED
- Sojourner and Recovery & Wellness: operating normal.

## From Graceworks Lutheran Services

As a social ministry arm of the church, I want you to know that Graceworks Lutheran Services is doing everything within our power to provide care and support for our residents and employees in this unprecedented time. In the midst of this, I am more grateful than ever for Graceworks' brand commitment to Faithful Caring. Those two simple words sum up what Graceworks' staff have been accomplishing over the past two weeks. Our employees have shown Faithful Caring to our residents, each other and in the communities in which we serve. I could not be more proud of their efforts. Faithful Caring has four tenets that we emphasize: Compassion, Competence, Stability and Values. It is through this lens that we are making decisions and caring for those in need.

**COMPASSION:**  
This unprecedented crisis has left everyone feeling uncertain, isolated, and at times fearful. Our staff realizes this and is taking meaningful steps to mitigate the negative, often emotional, impact on those within our care.

At Bethany Village, the Life Enrichment team is producing daily shows including pastoral messages, fitness classes, entertainment and updates on our internal Bethany TV. One resident commented via email,

"Thanks, again, to all the staff for your Faithful Caring to keep us informed through emails, fed with Dinners to Go, less anxious with The Word, moving with exercise and entertained with movies." This was in an email titled, "No Boredom!" We are using the power of technology to help our residents stay connected. Residents at Bethany are being given access to iPads to help FaceTime with families. One family member responded, "It is nice to see my mom smile when she sees me on the screen." A very compassionate staff member is using her own phone to call family members each evening and placing the phone by the residents ears so they can say good night.. At one Graceworks Housing Services property, all residents are getting meals on wheels delivered, regardless of qualifications. At another site, a local Avon lady brought samples for our staff to share with residents as a message that even in isolation, they are not alone.

Compassion is not just being shown staff to resident, but certainly resident to resident as well. We know that many residents across service lines are stepping up to check on one another and help lift the spirits of their friends.

**COMPETENCE:**  
We have senior leadership from all areas meeting daily to review and respond to changing guidelines coming from all areas of government. What makes me most proud is that we are not only responding, we are leading. Staff began meeting weeks ago to discuss the "what if's" of what then was a scenario, now a reality. Because of those pre-emptive discussions, we have been well prepared to institute processes needed to keep our staff and residents as safe as possible.

**STABILITY:**  
As you can imagine, stability is perhaps the hardest tenet to attain in this situation. Staff is focused on making sure, to the best of our ability, that the basic needs of our residents and employees are met. I have always been confident in the ability of our staff to rise up in times of need. That same confidence is at an all-time high. Because we have had to limit or prohibit visitors in all our facilities, we are checking on residents regularly, providing meal services where appropriate, and being creative in our programming to minimize the feelings of isolation and loneliness. We are balancing the needs of our employees at home with the needs of the organization, keeping safety as our number one goal.

**VALUES:**  
In all of this, I hope you can see that above all else, staff

is remaining dedicated to our stated Values which have guided us over the years, regardless of our circumstances. Certainly in times of change and confusion, we remain Faithful to Christ, for there is no greater source of strength and wisdom. As residents and staff experience a decrease in their Wholeness of Life, we strive for Equality and Justice, Quality of Service and Integrity. We are committed to being good Stewards of Resources, using our time, talented staff and financial means to help minimize the negative impact the coming weeks will undoubtedly bring.

In all this, we know that our Member Congregations are facing similar challenges. Know that now, more than ever, you are in our thoughts and prayers. Our covenant relationship is built on the understanding that we are in shared ministry. With God's help, we will continue to faithfully care for those we serve.

*From, Judy Budi  
President & CEO  
Graceworks Lutheran  
Services*



Graceworks  
Lutheran Services

## From The Voge Family

Hello from Cyprus,

We hope you are all doing well in the midst of this global pandemic!

We wanted to send a little update on what life looks like right now here in Cyprus. About two weeks ago, the coronavirus hit the island and things have steadily gotten more restricted as the virus has spread. We are currently on a “stay at home” lockdown. We are only able to leave the house by sending a text message and receiving permission for necessary outings (hospital, pharmacy, grocery store and etc.) The schools have already been closed for the last 2 weeks as they began limiting larger gatherings. So we began a new family rhythm at that time. Lily and Eliyas have been doing their school work from home. Their teachers have been doing a great job keeping connected and giving them their assignments. It’s been new for us to have all 4 home like this! It can be intense at times as stress levels feel higher with not being able to leave the house. But every day, we receive fresh grace and perspective. We have started some new family rhythms which have been fun...family exercise, craft times, and some home projects we’ve had on the shelf for a while.

During this time, we have especially been thinking of our refugee friends here. We know that in these uncertain times, they are very vulnerable, and some of the current instability in the country can trigger their previous traumatic experiences. Their regular support structures have also changed during this time, in

terms of getting food coupons, food supplements, and etc. So we have especially been praying for them and reaching out to them virtually to check in regularly. We have been sending video messages, photos, voice messages and texts. Jon has been passing on the Jesus movie to Muslim families he has been reaching out to. Since they have nothing to do, they have time to explore what we believe in. Technology is an amazing gift in this time, which we are so thankful for! Additionally, we have been making sure that every YWAM here in Cyprus is well connected and doing okay emotionally. Yesterday, we met with our entire YWAM community here via zoom, in order to check in and pray for each other. We believe that in this time, the Lord can also deepen our relationships, which we believe will be an amazing gift.

This pause came at a time where we were just getting started in going deeper with some of our relationships with refugee friends/ trafficked women. Michelle had started the Beautiful Hope Program with her colleague and a participant from Africa. They had some beautiful times together, establishing community for the past couple of months. The woman who joined truly seemed to love the program and it was something she looked forward to all week. Jon was also going deeper in relationship with some of his Kurdish friends, sharing and doing life on regular basis. He was planning to begin a study on the gospel of John. So we are really trusting the Lord with these precious relationships and that God will continue to



cultivate what He began. Please pray for these friends during this time!

We know that these are interesting days for all of us worldwide, as we have all taken a pause on our “normal” lives. Many of our friends/ colleagues feel that they have more time in this season. This is not the case for us, as our time has been completely filled with taking care of the kids/ homeschooling/ etc. There is little margin. But we are also choosing to view this time as a gift, and believe that the Lord has something special for us as a family. We know that the world will look different once this time is over and believe it will be for the good.

We wanted to let you know, we are thinking of you and praying for you! We know that this virus is not from God, but we do believe that God is in control and will be glorified through his people. This global pause- slowing down, focusing on our families, creating new rhythms, meeting with God and others in new and creative ways- will bear lasting fruit! May you be encouraged today with God’s strength, peace, and abundant grace!

Thank You!



THANK YOU FOR CARING  
ABOUT OUR KIDS AND  
FAMILIES! YOUR  
DONATION WAS A  
BLESSING AND WILL  
TRULY HELP.  
THANK YOU!!

SHANE ALLISON  
SCHOOL NURSE  
Northridge Local  
SCHOOLS