

## MEMORIAL LUTHERAN, TOLEDO

Dear Family of Faith at Memorial Lutheran Church,

These past few months have been very different for us. We have met challenges and have still remained an active community of faith by taking advantage of opportunities and addressing changes quickly. My main concern was my pastoral call to you during these new times. My staff and our council have stepped up with new innovative ways of answering our call to serving God and God's people with hope, faith and trust.

Now we are in a new season, in a "Plan of Return" to physical worship and activities. My plan is to move slowly, erring on the *side of caution*, as we follow Governor DeWine and Bishop Beaudoin's recommendations. We know and trust in God's promise to us as our Bible says of Him, "Look, I am making all things new". I whole-heartedly trust in God and believe that He is leading us through all things, creating a new fresh way to do ministry and to live our lives. He will never let us down, and He wants the best for His people.

Bishop Beaudoin quoted Galatians in His words to us pastors in planning for this return, "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:13-14). Love is at the very center of God's being and therefore needs to be at the center of our being as a people of God. Love for God and love for each other is our foundation and guiding hope at this time in our history.

With that love, our return will be incremental. We are focusing on the extended safety of the whole people of God. The movement towards a new normalcy will be laced with fits and starts, just as our response has been to the Covid-19 Crisis since its onset. One thing that is clear is that God is with us, but the virus has clearly made a decided mess in our lives. I believe that God has already won over all this, though, and is calling us to move slowly and intentionally toward Him and new life. This is an ongoing race that is not a short sprint "through the valley", but a journey through only a "shadow". Cautious, intentionally planned movement together will bring us through the valley of the shadow of the Covid-19 Virus and its hard-hitting impact on all our lives.

I began at the end of March, a short 2 ½ months after arriving in Ohio, heavily praying for vision from God of how to lead in this totally uncharted time. God has answered every prayer. And they are still continually lifted up, and I have no doubt that He will continue to take our hands in His own and lead, and lift, and pull, and hoist us to where we need to be. I have listened to almost every minute that our governor has shared with us, and have been in personal and synod wide communication with our Bishop and our conference, and the synod's specially appointed team of medical staff and lay and clergy weekly in their advice for us. Our Executive Council has met and our president has also been in conference time with our Bishop, as well as nurses and doctors in our congregation. We have studied the available facts and the available resources to frame our plan of action to return to our building and to in-person worship.

I have been sharing with you throughout this time what is going on and with the decisions that have been formed within this great collective. In this letter, I will repeat and keep you informed you with our ongoing discoveries and plans. We have made these plans with your safety in mind. These plans will continue to unfold as our future is more fully revealed to us.

## **1. Worship Services**

- a. We will continue sending bulletins via email and mail (please print them to use if you are coming to worship at church).
- b. We will continue to offer worship on You Tube through our website
- c. We will continue to use our radio band if you wish to worship in the parking lot when we worship inside, beyond our scheduled drive-in worship service
- d. We will begin two worship services in the sanctuary in June: 9 am and 11 am. Two are offered to ensure enough space in the building for social distancing.

## **2. Worship safety practices**

- a. Please enter the building with a mask and wear it during the service. Connections will provide you with one.
- b. No physical touching at this time which includes passing offering plates (stationary plate will be at entrance and you can place your offering there or mail it in), passing the peace, handshaking or hugging.
- c. Please come into building and directly into the sanctuary, don't linger in the narthex or hall. You may use bathroom; an attendant will clean in between uses.
- d. Please maintain 6 feet social distancing. Use every other pew for seating, and follow the floor markings to maintain distance during communion. (Wear mask in communion line and take communion back to your seat and partake there. Dispose of your glass when you exit.)
- e. No congregational singing is permissible at this time, but music may be offered for listening and meditation.
- f. Use hand sanitizers in the pew regularly.
- g. At the end of service, ushers will dismiss you row by row, please leave the sanctuary directly and go to the front lawns for socially distanced fellowship. The sanctuary will be cleaned in between services and our staff needs the full hour to be ready for the next service and worshippers. (Connections will offer a prepackaged snack)

## **3. Office and Building use**

- a. Our staff will be working in the building, increasing hours in their offices. We have done some remodeling to ensure their safety. Please visit only by appointment, so we can limit number of people in the building, and allow for a safe working environment.
- b. We have a Zoom account to use for meetings and committee gatherings.

## **4. Visitation**

- a. Pastor will begin visiting shut-ins as allowed by hospitals and nursing homes in the future.
- b. A "Bridge phone care" team has been set up to call seniors and at risk people on a weekly basis.
- c. Staff will continue to be available on their cell phones.

## **5. Activities**

- a. In person Sunday School, youth, and other activities are still on hiatus. We will be planning safe, social distancing activities later in the summer for our children and youth.
- b. Camping, synod convention, etc. has been cancelled by synod for the summer. We are working on planned events in a different way, watch for details.

**6. At risk persons, and/or seniors**

- a. We encourage you to be careful. Stay home if you don't feel safe to venture out yet. Your safety is very important.
- b. If you have any needs, please call the office/staff, we are happy to take your call and try to assist you.

Be assured that we are taking all the necessary measures for sanitation. Your health, especially your spiritual well-being, is in great priority. Each one of you is very precious, loved, and a needed part of the body of Christ. I look forward to working through all these things together. I look forward to where God is taking us. As your pastor, know that I look forward to caring for you, praying for you, and knowing you more fully as a brother or sister in Christ. Thank you for your prayers, your understanding, your love for your church and for me.

Rev. A.N. Mary Adelsberger