

COVID-19 UPDATE #11
3/24/2020

SPECIAL NOTE: Wednesday's broadcast will begin at 10:30, following the broadcast at 9:30 of our mid-week Lenten service.

Please share this information with friends, family, neighbors who don't have access to email.

(I am now placing the "Reminders" section at the end of these notes. I am also sending out my notes for the live broadcasts as the primary content of the notes.)

Items from today's video update:

- "This is the day the Lord has made. . . .Let us rejoice and be glad in it."
- Another new normal. Routine. Why we're coming from WEC, worship from church
 - We believe we are acting within both the letter and spirit of the directive.
 - Taking extreme precautions. Nobody wants to be the one to cause this virus to spread to someone else.
 - Essential functions of the congregation are still being covered.
- Luther's morning prayer

"I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angels be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen."
- The office is closed and locked.
 - Phone calls will be forwarded automatically. You can still get through by calling 652-6141. Please be mindful of the fact that we have a very reduced staff.
 - One member of the pastoral team carries a "burner phone." You can contact us after hours by calling 652-6141.
 - Offerings can no longer be dropped off at the church office. Please consider on-line giving. If you need help getting that set up, you are welcome to contact Jeremy Frank at: jfrank@stlorenz.org You may also mail your offerings to St. Lorenz, 140 Churchgrove Road. Making bank deposits and paying bills are some of the essential functions we continue to cover.
 - We are striving diligently to be good stewards of the funds entrusted to us by our members. We are reducing expenditures where possible. We also have a very strong desire to make sure that our workers' financial situations are not adversely affected any more than is absolutely necessary.
- The church is also locked.
- Technical difficulties continue to pop up from time to time. We address those as quickly as possible. We appreciate your patience.

- Holy Week and Easter.
 - We will rebroadcast previous Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services on those days. We are hoping that the primary focus can be on the events surrounding our Lord's suffering and death during the days leading up to His crucifixion.
 - We are working on some special ways to celebrate Jesus' incredible victory over sin, death, and the devil at His resurrection. More on that soon.

Today's Topic: Communion.

We've had lots of conversations about how we could arrange for our folks to receive Communion from us. As we considered various options for how we might do that, it became abundantly clear that each of them carried more risk than we felt was acceptable. For the time being at least, we will not be offering Communion.

While that is indeed regrettable, we can be assured that God continues to hold us close to Himself. Here are some truths about Communion that it might be helpful for us to review:

Communion is A Means of Grace, not THE Means of Grace. ("Means of Grace" is a term to describe how God gives forgiveness to people.) There are two others:

- Baptism. We will still do private, immediate family only baptisms. Each of us who has been baptized can rejoice in that fact every day and can its benefits at all time.
- Gospel. We are sharing that far and wide. You can read God's Word on your own or listen to it being read and proclaimed. Where the Gospel is shared, forgiveness is received and faith is strengthened.

Communion is a great blessing. In our zeal to emphasize that, it's possible to give the wrong impression – to make people think that our faith is in jeopardy if we are not able to receive it for a period of time. The Bible never states that. God has not set a minimum number of times a Christian needs to receive Communion in order to remain in the faith. Nor has He commanded how frequently it should be received. Rather, He gives us a marvelous invitation to receive from Jesus the very body and blood our Lord sacrificed for us on the cross. It is a wonderful assurance of God's continued grace.

Here's one way to think of it:

- In the Gospel, we learn how Jesus' sacrificed His life for ours.
- In the Sacrament, we receive the very body and blood that were sacrificed for us.

It's our desire to receive this great blessing as frequently as possible. The emphasis there should be on the words: "as possible." When it's not possible, we are not neglecting the Sacrament.

Spiritually, what does Communion give us that God's Word doesn't? NOTHING. Until we are able to once again celebrate the Lord's Supper, we confidently rely on God's Word to do what He promises it will do.

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther talks about the Lord's Supper. One of the questions with its answer is:

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?

“Forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

All of those come to us in Communion. Thank You, Jesus!

All of those come to us in Baptism. Thank You, Jesus!

All of those come to us in the Gospel. Thank You, Jesus!

We also remember from history that there was a time when Lutheran congregations celebrated the Sacrament only once per quarter. While I'm very grateful for the way we have been able to offer it every weekend, I'm certainly not willing to say that those who received it only quarterly had a weaker faith than do we.

We also know there were other times in history when circumstances made it impossible for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated for a period of time. I'm thinking of the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 when churches were shut down. Also during the early days of our nation on the frontier, it was not unusual for people to go for months or even years between visits from a circuit rider.

Finally, please pray for our Franklin Avenue Mission, for the small groups who are preparing meals, and for all those in that neighborhood who are need of the physical, emotional, and spiritual nourishment that FAM offers and provides.

Early Christians were often separated from each for long periods of time. In his letters, St. Paul usually acknowledges that with concluding greetings that he sends. Here's the one I read today:

2 Corinthians 13:11-14

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Reminders:

- We are planning to have a live video update at 10:00 a.m. every weekday. It will be broadcast on Charter Channel 191, live-streamed on-line, and on Facebook Live.
- The live-stream can now be accessed simply by clicking on the “Worship” tab at the top of our church web site. We will be archiving those video updates at the bottom of the homepage under “COVID-19.”

- To receive a notification that we are live on Facebook, please “Like” the St. Lorenz Lutheran Church and School Facebook page. For those of you who don’t use Facebook, this might be a time you decide to make an exception.
- If you have a topic you’d me to talk about, please let me know. You can just reply to this email to do so. Your reply is seen only by me. If you are having trouble reaching us through church@stlorenz.org (one person couldn’t get that email address to work), feel free to email me: mbrandt@stlorenz.org
- Our Frankenmuth city leaders are doing an outstanding job of gathering information and ways to help. Please check these web sites for updates and resources:
 - www.frankenmuthcity.com
 - www.frankenmuth.org

Thanks again for your patience and cooperation! We are truly blessed to have each other – and God – to be with in this time.

We continue to thank God for His faithfulness and the hope and confidence that gives us!

Remember: church@stlorenz.org If that doesn’t work, email me at: mbrandt@stlorenz.org

652-6141

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25 BROADCAST WILL BE AT 10:30

Mid-week service will be broadcast at the usual times of 9:30, 5:00, and 7:00.s