



Emmanuel Lutheran Church
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March 18, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In Psalm 46, one of my favorites, the Psalmist writes, ***“Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling”*** (Ps 46:2-3). For many people, including many of you, these words appear to be coming true.

As your business closes or you see a significant drop in revenue, as your job situation looks tenuous and as you lose income, the earth seems to give way. As you worry about your ability to avoid the epidemic (and to survive it if you get it), as you worry about your elderly family and your children the waters are roaring and foaming. As you worry about the stock market and your savings, as you worry because you just don’t know what is going to happen, the mountains are trembling. You may feel restless and afraid. The world very much seems to be in turmoil, and though the virus has yet to show its presence in our community, it is a frightening and disconcerting time.

I know some of you are afraid. I know some of you are panicking. I know your children are frightened by the changes and restlessness in the house. The fact that people are buying more toilet paper than they can use in six months, tells us that fear is causing some to act irrationally. But know this: the fear, uncertainty and worry are from Satan. He is the one who stirs up the helplessness in your heart and the restlessness in your mind. He is the one who wants you lose hope as you see the roaring waters and the trembling mountains. He is your enemy, but he is certainly not your conqueror!

When you are afraid and hopeless, you don’t need platitudes or clichés, you need the words and promises of our God. So, hear this: ***“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns”*** (Ps 46:1,5). You are baptized, you are redeemed by Christ the Crucified, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, so you don’t need to be afraid. As Paul says in Romans,

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure 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” (Rom 8:35, 37-39).

While this is a difficult time, God uses all things for the good of those who love Him (Rom 8:28) and this is a time when Emmanuel will be a beacon for those who are hurting. Saint Paul puts it this way: ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God”*** (2 Cor 1:3-4). Let us act as the Body of Christ and serve each other and our community in every possible way.

To that end, if you need any assistance whatsoever, please call me (712-830-5017) and I will arrange it. We have members of Emmanuel’s family who are willing to pick up groceries and mail, transport you to the doctor or the pharmacy, and whatever else is necessary to keep you safe. East Sac County schools will be providing breakfast and lunch free of charge to all children ages 1-18. If you cannot pick up your child’s meal or if they can’t get to the school to pick it up, please contact me as well.

If you are willing to volunteer your time to help run errands, please call me right away.

One of the most distressing consequences of the spread of COVID-19 is that we can’t gather in worship and prayer. This is especially unfortunate since this is when we most want to be in God’s House, hear His Word, and receive Holy Communion. I have spent a lot of time studying the situation and talking to medical professionals I trust, and I have decided that it is not safe for us to gather for worship, even in groups of ten. This saddens me deeply! Until we can again worship together, we will have to find other ways to be fed with the Word of God. Here are some alternatives that I have implemented or hope to do soon.

1. You can read the sermons at lakeviewemmanuel.com or Facebook.
2. I will be livestreaming and recording Sunday services (God willing).
3. Providing a worship bulletin which will enable you to follow along with the Sunday service.
4. A telephone number that you can access to hear the service live on Sunday mornings (or anytime as a recording).
5. I will come to your home and bring the Lord’s Supper.

Finally, one topic we don’t like to discuss, but we must, is the financial situation of the church. As you are probably aware, funds have been tight at Emmanuel and with the interruption of our weekly gatherings, this has the potential to be damaging to our congregation and its mission. We need your offerings to continue to pay our bills and provide for the ministries we support. Here some ways that you can give your offerings to the Lord.

1. Mail your offering to Emmanuel at PO Box 260. They will be regularly gathered and deposited in the bank.
2. Place them under the church office door. Please do not leave them in the mailboxes in the narthex or anywhere that’s not secure.
3. Sign up for online giving at www.lakeviewemmanuel.com, follow the links and set up your offerings to be one-time or recurring. You can also access this form from your mobile device.

4. If you do not have computer access you may complete an authorization form available from me.

We don't know how this epidemic is going to end, nor do we know what affect it will have on our congregation. What we do know is that Christ's Church will always stand, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it. We know that God alone is the rock and fortress upon whom we base our hope. And we know we can trust the Lord when He says, ***"Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"*** (Ps 27:14)

Let me leave you with a blessing from the Lord: ***"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all"*** (2 Thess 3:16).

In Christ and trusting in His promises,

Pastor