

March 14, 2020

Dear Emmanuel Community:

As the concerns about the COVID-19 outbreak spread, we received an email early this morning from Bishop Deborah Hutterer, the Bishop of the Grand Canyon Synod with the following message.

“Having prayerfully considered our current situation with respect to COVID-19, in conversation with bishops from the wider church, and in light of the quickly evolving nature of this pandemic, ***I am recommending that all ELCA congregations in the Grand Canyon Synod, regardless of location or number of congregants, suspend public worship gatherings, events and meetings beginning immediately until at least April 1, possibly longer.***”

Our executive committee met this morning and are all in agreement that this is a wise step and that we will **immediately suspend worship, meetings and gatherings of any kind at the church until at least April 1st**, as recommended by the Bishop.

Jesus put the most vulnerable and marginalized in the center of the community and by taking this step we are doing this as well. I know this will be difficult, but we need to find ways to be church together, even when we can't be proximate to each other! It will take some thinking outside of the box and I encourage all of us to come up with new ways of being church in our community.

**Where do we go from here?** The church will be closed but there will often be folks in the building (keeping a safe distance from each other and using lots of Clorox wipes) during the week to keep things moving forward. We will ask our staff to work from home when possible. Please consider mailing your offerings or using Bill Pay via your bank to continue to support the ministries at Emmanuel if you are able.

Tomorrow morning you will be able to go to the Emmanuel Lutheran Church website, <http://www.emmanuelutheranpv.org> and access a brief worship service and audio of my sermon for this Sunday. From the home page, click on the **Worship With Us** tab, then look for the **Audio Sermons** link at the bottom. We have organized the media team to begin working on live-streaming services and will keep you posted about our progress. Check out the Emmanuel Lutheran Church, ELCA Facebook page for more current information as well.

We have purchased a subscription to Zoom.com, an online video/audio conferencing site that will allow us to be in contact with each other and even perhaps offer Bible Studies and other kinds of meetings through this medium. The Care and Nurture ministry has been asked to work with the Fellowship ministry to activate a phone tree. The Executive committee of the council will be meeting via Zoom.com daily for a while to keep on top of things.

We will send out a weekly email newsletter to keep you up to date and I will be making phone calls to the entire congregation in the next few days. We will send the most current church directory out to the congregation via email on Monday. Let us know you if you would like a hard copy, we can put one in the mail to you. Please continue to be safe and use common sense precautions. I am available via my cell phone, 310-890-9785.

As the Bishop said, in the midst of it all, we will care for one another, we will pray for one another, and we will be Christ's Church. May God grant us wisdom, and grant us courage for the facing of this hour,

In Christ,  
Pr. Tricia Lowe  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church Prescott Valley, AZ