



**THE ATLANTIC DISTRICT**  
*of the LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD*

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Brothers in Ministry,

Blessed Lententide!

The Coronavirus is causing concern in our communities as many watch it spread. It is prudent to engage and assist the members of your congregation, as these fears may be their own. The challenge is recognizing the fear, concerns, and complexity of the issues that we face as we develop a plan to mitigate any concerns. As pastors of the church we need to strive to be the non-anxious presence or the calm in the midst of chaos.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) provided some guidelines for public spaces and worship areas. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with these guidelines and implement appropriate practices.

The recommendations from the CDC (CDC.gov):

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

As you know fear is a real issue. We want to acknowledge the fear of those we serve and make appropriate accommodations as possible. You and the congregation you serve need to make decisions about what temporary actions the congregation will chose to make and implement. These are some thoughts and questions to examine. Remember these may be temporary changes to practices to deal with the issue at hand.

- What steps can we take to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus or any disease?
- What steps will we take if the Coronavirus begins to spread in my community?
- Is it possible to make hand sanitizer readily available in multiple locations?
- Encourage members who are feeling ill, especially with a fever, to not come to church.
- How can we accommodate people who are not comfortable shaking hands or passing the peace? Can we touch elbows, bow, use the sign for peace, or simply speak a greeting?
- During the Lord's Supper how can we accommodate those who have concerns?
- How do we continue to share God's Word for those who self-quarantine?

Mandated quarantines are starting to occur in New York where Coronavirus has been diagnosed. It is prudent to develop a plan of action for the parish in case a local quarantine is enacted. It is important to be able to continue to communicate with the members of your parish and share God's Word in the midst of a crisis.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23, ESV)

May the Lord keep us all from danger and harm. May he strengthen and encourage our medical workers as they assist those in need. May he provide the wisdom necessary to all who make plans to help our world, prevent the spread and contain this disease. Motivate us to do that which we can to assist our congregations and communities, that they might know the love of Christ amidst these troubling times. Finally may He remind us that the hope we have is the hope of life eternal, which comes from Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord who gives his life for us and promises us his presence always. May the Lord work in you to be His love and grace as you comfort those who are fearful of what is to come.

Communication to the congregation is critical in this process. Your flock wants to know that you recognize what is going on in the world and are developing a plan to deal with it. It is always a challenge to balance our faith and practice with the concerns and reality of the matter at hand. As you communicate with the congregation recognize the concern and reality of the situation. Then provide your plan in general and specifically with regards to: handwashing, sickness, passing the peace, and Holy Communion. I have attached a letter for you to adapt for your own purposes if you so choose. This is about taking appropriate precautions.

These are just some thoughts to ponder. If you have any questions or need help to develop a specific ministry plan, please reach out to the Task Force 8 chaired by Rev. Tom Cusanelli [pastorcusanelli@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcusanelli@gmail.com) or the district office.

In Christ,



Rev. Derek G. Lecakes  
President/Bishop of the Atlantic District

