



THE ATLANTIC DISTRICT
of the LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

ENGAGING THE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL OF HOPE!

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AD-LCMS.ORG

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Brothers in Christ,

³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39, ESV)

How do we love our neighbor today when everything seems to be shutting down? This is a great question and there are a number of levels that need to come as part of our response in the midst of this situation.

As you know Covid-19 continues to spread. For many this will result in a mild set of symptoms. However, those who are most vulnerable may have a much more severe reaction in their symptoms. The most at risk are part of the population we serve. The social (physical) distancing of six feet; the recommendations of the CDC to not have groups meeting of more than 50; and the adjustment to the Certificate of Occupancy has been cut in half are real ways that we can love our neighbor by helping to slow the speed at which this virus spreads.

Based on the most recent information and conversations with the experts I have spoken with, I am compelled to strongly encourage you to cease in-person worship services for the time being. I know that this is a struggle, but it seems the prudent course to continue to love our neighbor through this unprecedented time.

If you are choosing to continue to meet, you **MUST** make all the accommodations and follow the guidelines set by the civil authorities. These do apply to us as well. Limiting contact and physical distancing from one another are important steps to assist the slow of this virus.

The challenge for us as pastors is to continue to offer pastoral care in the midst of the situation we are facing. Pastoral care is the single most important thing that we can be about. I encourage you to be

- reaching out to the most vulnerable to listen, share and pray. P
- calling each of your members on a regular basis to touch base and allay fears.
- starting with those that are most at risk.
- spending time talking and praying with them.
- making sure that someone is checking in on them and their basic needs are being met.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Romans 15:3. ESV)

When it comes to worship, there is a Digital Guide to worship on the Atlantic District Website, AD-LCMS.org. It has thoughts for a spoken liturgy via phone or video-based services. If that is too much, even simply recording your message and sending it out via email. is something you can do with any smart phone. If you are struggling with a plan to utilize digital worship, please reach out and let us know. You can also direct your members to a sister church that is already doing digital worship in some format.

I am in the process of setting a schedule of video conferences to provide regular updates and work through issues that are arising. The Praesidium, the Circuit Visitors, Atlantic District Staff will all be meeting regularly to deal with whatever issues arise and make sure communication is happening. There will be a time for you to meet and discuss issues or questions you are facing. We have tried this a number of times already and have received a good response for those who attended. We are learning as we move forward together.

I encourage you as pastors to continue to talk and meet. However, instead of doing it in person, use videoconferencing; phone conferencing; or text instead. We need to be here to support one another.

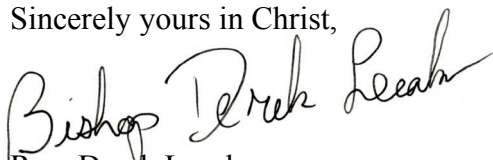
It is important that we continue to share the love of Jesus as His called shepherds of the flock. They need us today as they did a month ago. It is a challenge to minister in this world at this time, but we can face this together.

I continue to pray for you. I am available to answer your questions and help you process the issues that continue to change in this world around us.

You are in my prayers brothers. May we be the presence of Christ in this world at this time to point others to Jesus.

... fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10, ESV)

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Derek Lecakes

President/Bishop of the Atlantic District