

Friday, March 19, 2020

Letter from Pastor Wolfmueller

Dear Saints of St Paul Lutheran Church,

God be praised for the joy and confidence we have in Jesus! How wonderful for us to know that Jesus has us in life and in death, in good times and in bad. We receive these tumultuous days as we receive everything: from the hand of our gracious heavenly Father who loves us. We know, after all, that all things, even pandemics, work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

These are, though, days of sadness.

As the Coronavirus has spread throughout the world, unprecedented steps have been asked of us by our government officials, including the prohibition of meetings of ten or more people. The Elders and I made the decision to comply with the prohibition and cancel our meeting together.

As far as I can tell, this is the first time physical services have been canceled in the 129 year history of St. Paul Lutheran Church.

I would invite you to consider this a time of fasting, a chastisement that the Lord has laid on us. We are fasting from the great treasure of His body and blood. We are fasting from the gift of meeting together. This is not a fast that we have chosen, it has been given to us. Indeed this is a Lent like no other.

True fasting is always accompanied with repentance and prayer. We repent of our indifference to spiritual things, of our coldness toward the Lord's gifts, and to the casualness with which we have treated the holy things of God. And we pray that the Lord would quickly end this trouble so that we would once again gather before His holy altar with hearts leaping for joy, and dry lips quenched with His forgiving blood. Oh, to take up the cup of the Lord! O Lord, hear our prayer!

True fasting also turns our hearts to our neighbors. We will have plenty of opportunities in the coming weeks to love and serve our neighbors, both physically and spiritually.

We also rejoice that we have the Lord's Word. We have Bibles to read, and hymns to sing. Technology allows us to broadcast our services to members and the world through the internet.

We are still sorting out how best to serve the members of our congregation and bless our neighbors in these trouble times. Here is what we have so far.

Sunday Service

We will have one Sunday Service broadcast on the internet. This will be live at 9:00 am, and then available to watch anytime after that. You will be able to find the service, and a bulletin to download at this website: www.stpaulaustin.org/live. This is a public service, and we encourage you to share this link and the information with your friends and family.

===The following should only be shared with members and friends, regular visitors===

Adult Sunday School

Sunday School will begin at 10:30 am. We will be using a program called “Zoom” for Sunday School. This will allow us to participate, ask questions, and see and hear one another. Even if you are not tech-savvy, Zoom is simple to use. You will be surprised.

Here is how to connect.

If you are on a computer, click this link and follow the on-screen prompts to join the bible study with full interactive video: <https://zoom.us/j/954581066>

To join by phone (Audio Only): Dial (346) 248-7799 and when prompted enter the Meeting ID: 954581066

Evan Hein will be acting as tech-support. If you have any trouble, he can be reached by email (evan.hein@stpaulaustin.org) or phone (512-971-6579).

Sunday School will be semi-private. We are gearing this class for congregation members, friends, and family. We will also be inviting the members of Hope, Aurora, to join us. (They are also canceled, and won't be having remote options.) Please do not post these links on social media.

(I hope to start some other Bible Studies that will be public, but I'd like to keep Sunday School a “St. Paul event”.) Thank you for your help with this.

For the Non-Technical

If you do not have a computer or access to the internet, we will be mailing our services out every week. These will be available printed, on an audio CD, or on a video DVD. If you would like to receive the service this way, please contact the church office and let Elsa

know. (email: churchoffice@stpaulaustin.org, phone: 512-472-8301) You can also let any of your Elders know as well, and they will pass on the information to the church office.

Giving

Thank you for providing generously for our congregation. While we cannot meet together there are various ways to continue to support the congregation. Deb has sent the following information:

Online Giving: <https://www.stpaulaustin.org/give-to-st-paul/> Click on "Donate" and follow instructions to register.

Text: 512-982-0557 with the amount you would like to contribute. Make sure to include the dollar sign before the amount. Example: \$50. Within a few minutes, you'll be sent a text with a link to register. Click on the link and enter your cardholder name and credit or debit card information. Once your registration is complete, you will receive a text verification and a receipt via email. For future giving, simply send a text with the amount you wish to give, and it will process automatically!

Mail: St Paul Lutheran Church, 3501 Red River Street, Austin Tx 78757-8301

There are a lot of other plans coming together, including plans for Youth Confirmation, Children's Sunday School, plans for communion if the prohibition of gathering together is extended, and so forth.

If you have any needs, prayers to add to the prayer list, or anything else, please contact me and/or your Elder.

My phone number is 303-525-4991, and email is bwolfmueller@gmail.com.

And, if you have ideas about how we can better serve you, our members, and the world, please let me know.

We continue to pray that the Lord Jesus would grant us His comfort and peace, and that we would grow through these days in faith toward Him and fervent love toward one another.

Lord have mercy.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Wolfmueller