

Dear People of Glory Lutheran Church, Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and Peace be with you!

As the situation with the COVID-19 outbreak continues to develop, the Alberta government and our synodical and national church offices strongly advise churches to suspend all worship services and other gatherings.

Therefore, at Glory Lutheran Church:

Sunday worship services and Thursday Lenten services are cancelled effective immediately.

Confirmation classes are cancelled.

Meetings of various committees and groups will mostly take place via email or telephone.

There will be no user groups in the church until further notice.

Our secretary Heidi Jones will be at the church during office hours to answer telephone calls and email inquiries. Pastor Markus will be available either at the office or at home.

Funerals and memorial services may be celebrated at the church or postponed to a later date. Participation may be limited to family members. Receptions will not take place.

A recording of a worship service, including sermon, prayers, and music will be made available through our website, starting Sunday morning. You are encouraged to participate at the usual time, or whenever you are able.

We ask for your continued financial support through your offerings by sending your cheque to the office, donating on our website, or signing up for Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR).

We made these decisions out of consideration for the health of not only our church but of the whole community, and especially of those most vulnerable, particularly the elderly and those with compromised immune systems.

The bishops of the ELCIC state in their letter, "While social distancing may be required at this time, we must do all we can to avoid social isolation." At a time such as this the value of electronic means of communication is obvious. We encourage you to reach out to each other, particularly those who may be fearful or lonely, by phone, email, or text messaging. Please do not hesitate to call or email Pastor Markus, if you would like prayer or need someone to listen to.

Below are some prayers that Pastor Markus wrote for use alone or as a family. These prayers may change or be updated from time to time in the coming weeks. If there are several of you, you could take turns reading the petitions and have all respond with "hear our prayer".

Let us pray.

Gracious God,

As the schools in Alberta are stopping classes and children are staying home, we pray for our children. Help them know your loving care and your abiding peace in this confusing time.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Give us age-appropriate language and the right words when we speak to our children. Help us listen to what they know and what they are afraid of regarding the Corona virus. Help us distinguish established facts from irrational fears. Help us use media appropriately and not become fixated on news updates or fall prey to false information.

Lord, in your mercy...

Give our spirits resilience, our bodies strength, our minds calm, our hearts faith. Show us how we can use the extra time we have at home creatively. Help us find new routines and patterns to structure our days and strengthen our bonds with each other. Provide us with the financial and other resources we need to deal with the disruption of our work-day lives. Thank you for the arrival of Springtime, the birds returning, the sun's stronger light, the promise of new life. Let the beauty of creation infect us with joy and anticipation.

Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for the elderly, those who are vulnerable to infection, the lonely, the fearful, those in nursing homes and hospitals. Send them your healing, peace, strength and patience.

Lord, in your mercy...

We thank you for and commend to you all teachers who are preparing online material for students, and for technical support staff and internet providers. We pray for students anxious about their education and graduation. Give them confidence in their learning and help them find healthy ways to reduce their stress.

Lord, in your mercy...

We thank you for and pray for all whose services are essential and involve a risk of infection: all medical staff, doctors, nurses, and other hospital workers, nursing home staff, paramedics, firefighters, police officers, store clerks and shelf stockers, warehouse workers and truckers, bus and taxi drivers, utility operators and distributors. Protect and bless them as they serve us with their work.

Lord, in your mercy...

We thank you and pray for all who work in laboratories, diagnostic and infectious disease facilities, and for all scientists searching for a cure. Bless them with health, strength, wisdom and success.

Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for those with chronic or acute illnesses, with various disabilities, those without enough food or clean water, the homeless and the destitute, all who live with ongoing challenges beyond this current threat. Help us not forget their concerns over our own.

Lord, in your mercy...

Thank you, Abba-Father, that you are compassionate and powerful to save. We thank you Jesus, that you carry our diseases and take away the sins of the world. Holy Spirit, teach us true humility, embrace us in our fears, renew our joy, strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and grant us your peace, now and forever.

Amen.

And finally, a link shared by Rhonda Berg to a poem:

<http://www.lynnungar.com/poems/pandemic/>