

The LORD will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;  
the LORD will watch over your coming and going  
both now and forevermore (Psalm 121).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing with an important update regarding worship services and activities at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church. As many of you are aware, the federal government has extended “social distancing” recommendations until the end of April. Even in the state of Alabama, we have experienced exponential spread of COVID-19 during the last 2 weeks. As a result, we are suspending worship services and activities until further notice. Unfortunately, this will include Holy Week and Easter (of course, we know Jesus is risen regardless of social distancing). **I do have an abundance of Palm branches. If anyone would like some, please come to the church on Friday or Saturday and I would be happy to give some to you.**

Our Governor, Kay Ivey, has not issued a “Stay at Home Order”; however, all public health leaders are telling us that this is a time it is wise to stay home. For the sake of our neighbor and church family, to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and especially for the sake of those who are most vulnerable to its effects, I believe that we as Christians have a moral obligation to do our part and an obligation to respect the governing authorities who have authority over us (Romans 13). For this reason, we will forgo meeting together for the time being.

It is certainly disappointing to not gather for worship. But we can also view this as a unique opportunity for us to spend time in God’s Word as individuals and families. I will be sending out “special” bulletins for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. The services will be available to view at normal service times. I also know social media and church websites are suffused with materials. Use discernment but there is a lot of good stuff. I will send you links to Bible studies and devotions. The April Newsletter can be viewed by entering this into your browser or attached in this email: <http://www.orlcflorence.org/Resources/Newsletter>

I will consider ways to begin “live” Bible studies online. I plan to begin these post-Easter. I appreciate your willingness to try new things and learn new platforms. This has stretched everyone.

Although we will not be meeting together for worship, the mission of the Church still carries on. I would like to thank everyone who has sent their tithes and special offerings to the church. This is a trying time but giving of first-fruits to the Lord is no less a spiritual discipline.

Please continue to pray: pray for an end to COVID-19, pray for our government-wisdom and unselfish decisions, pray for peace in our troubled world, pray for faith to trust in the will of God, pray for an increase in stewardship, pray for small businesses and industries, pray for people who have lost their jobs, pray for those who suffer losses including loved ones, pray for the elderly and children, pray for doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals, pray for those who suffer emotional or mental distress, pray for the families within our church. Here is our most current prayer list: *Donna, Jim Wallace, Marilyn, Betty, Betts, Nancy Kuehn, Robert*

*Givens, Peggy and Robert Smith, Don and Anne York, Martin, Ron and Pat Mahan (Ron has been hospitalized all week and is going to have surgery April 3<sup>rd</sup>), Bobby Bridges, Linda Van Sandt, Paxton Tucker, Hal LeMay, Ron and Phyllis Kimmel, Caitlyn Dennis, Russ, Dr. Kuberg, Karen Gabbert, Marilyn Unger (Steve's sister, her cancer has spread), and all people suffering with COVID-19, or suffering to treat patients with COVID-19. To all our prayer warriors- pray without ceasing.*

Above all, the Lord is faithful to us. He will see us through. May God grant you peace today and in the days ahead.

In the risen Christ,

Pastor Chris