**Zion’s Response to the Coronavirus**

We will continue to provide public access to the Lord’s good gifts of His Holy Word and Sacrament, for the comfort of your souls and the strengthening of your faith, for as long as we are permitted to do so by the Health Department. Your Lord cares for your needs of both body and soul, and so does your church. Thus, we are taking some steps at our church and school to prevent the spread of illness across our campus, and plan for the possible spread of the coronavirus in our community. We are monitoring new developments and will continue to reevaluate our steps and actions daily.

In the meantime, we can help protect ourselves and others from COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, while also minimizing the spread of infectious disease by:

* Avoiding close contact with sick people.
* Staying home if you are sick (dry cough, sore throat, fever, body aches, etc.).
* Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
* Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
* Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.
* Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces such as doorknobs, desks, and tables.
* We are prepared to alter our procedures and planning should the situation change. We are also thinking ahead regarding the impact activities and worship practices will have in the context of the coronavirus. We will communicate if any changes take place when the time is appropriate.
* It is important to remember that handling the spread of a serious contagion like the coronavirus is primarily a task for public health agencies. Any directives from the World Health Organization, CDC, or local governmental organizations should be followed.

Here's where you can find tools and resources for individuals and families, schools, communities, businesses, healthcare facilities, and first responders on the

DHHS website -  [http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus](http://dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus)

and CDC's website – [https://www.cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19%20) .

The NE Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] will allow county authorities to make decisions regarding school closings, length of closings, and quarantine requirements.

Regarding practices here at Zion Lutheran Church & School.

* Frequent cleaning of hard surfaces by our janitor and other staff.
* Instead of shaking hands, use a fist-bump or elbow-bump as a greeting.
* For communion:
  + The pastors will take additional measures to disinfect their hands prior to serving.
  + Individual glass cups are washed thoroughly after use.
  + Our chalice is made of gold, which has been shown to have “antiviral properties”.
  + The rim of the chalice is wiped after each use.
  + The alcohol content of the wine assists in limiting microbes.
  + Studies have shown that the chalice is actually more sanitary, if the above practices are followed, than individual cups, which are glass handled by more people.

It should be noted:

* If you believe your health will put someone else at risk, or if you believe your existing health conditions put you at risk from others, then please stay at home and call your pastors to see how the Lord’s ministry of Word and Sacrament may still reach you.
* There have been NO reports of disease being spread through use of the Common cup or individual cup. According to the CDC, due to the properties of precious metals, alcohol content and especially wiping the chalice, the risk is very, very minimal. In fact, there has NEVER been a documented case of the spread of infectious disease from using the Common cup.
* You are more likely to “catch something” from touching a doorknob, shaking hands or having a face-to-face conversation with someone infected than you are from taking communion.
* Our Lord Himself mandated that we eat and drink His Body and Blood in the bread and wine. While there will always be physical properties to the bread and wine (think of those who have gluten or alcohol intolerance), we seek to minimize these physical concerns by practices, but not by withholding or ignoring our Lord’s mandate and institution. In the Sacrament, He gives to us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation!

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3284951>

<https://www.ajicjournal.org/article/S0196-6553(98)70029-X/abstract>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1201971213001872>

Finally, “Be not afraid,” says your Lord, “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)

**Prayer at the Time of an Epidemic**

O Heavenly Father, we beg You to turn from us and from our neighbor the destruction and terror of this epidemic. We pray You, halt the Angel of Death as He relentlessly proceeds from dwelling to dwelling. We ask You, above all, not to let us be merely grief-stricken and fearful at this Your visitation, but we beg You to stir us all to an understanding of Your purposes. Grant us the grace of true, humble repentance. Tell us in words of life that You chasten those whom You love. Tell us that it is our good which You intend despite this evil. Grant success to the efforts to stem the tide of affliction and quicken hearts to bear the burdens of each other’s grief and need. Lord, it is Your mercy that we are not completely lost. Direct us to first tend to the needs of our soul and turn us earnestly to seek our peace with You through Jesus. Lord, You direct the course of life and death. Have mercy on us for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor DeLoach