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From the Senior Pastor  
Read 2 Corinthians 12:9

**“...my grace is sufficient for you...” God is with us, come what may.**

No one asked for this.

The world was a completely different place only a few weeks ago. Now, survival itself is a question. Some of the most primitive instincts dominate otherwise normal behavior. In some instances good sense is lost. Some will even put self-interest first.

Except for Christians

Faith, not fear, is how we deal with all of it.

The references below are a start in reading the Scripture not only for inspiration but for comfort, consolation, and the strength to go on.

Psalm 91

Psalm 103

2 Corinthians 12:9

ELW Hymn # 505

Spend some time with each of these readings. It will be helpful to read each one more than once. These readings reinforce what we already know: **God is with us, come what may.** We make it through good times and hard times because God is good, every day.

God keep us all.  
Pastor John Golv

*March 24, 2020 -*

*Please Read Matthew 6:25-34 and Hebrews 13:8*

**“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life...”**

**Jesus - Matthew 6:25**

Why Be Hopeful?

A great many Bible passages have been offered up when times are hard. Here is another: Hebrews 11:1 “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Certainly we have the assurances of our faith. Certainly we also hope for what we have lost (for the moment anyway).

At this moment, painfully, we can’t get together. We will again. It will be a time to do what we always do together: worship God, support each other, pray. Until that joyous day we can quote Jesus: “Do not be anxious...” he said. “Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day” he said. He also said, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in me...”

It may seem as though everything is broken, or breaking, or about to break. It may even seem that everything we hold most dear is letting go. But, “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.” Faith in God is not broken. It is not breaking. It will not break.

A great deal of what we value most has changed already, or will. It is the Gospel to say that the body of Christ has not and will not become unrecognizable. We help others as we have been helped. We pray for the Kingdom. We pray for God’s will to be done.

God has not given up on us. God hears our prayers. God knows what we need. Stay strong in your faith. Stay strong in your commitments to the other person. We may not be able to gather, but we know full well that we make it through to the other side, together. We may feel weak, even powerless, but we know full well that God is strong. We have long known that there is nothing that can separate us from God.

So we are hopeful. God continues to do what only God can do. We do what we can do, and all of it is more than good enough.

Our trust is in God, come what may.

God keep us all.

Pastor John Golv

P.S. (Please bear with me. I am still learning FaceBook. And, do you know how to program the carillon at Zion? If so please give me call – 218.686.9591)



**If you know someone who would appreciate a call during this time of isolation, call Darlene at 689-8921.  
We are working on a call list to stay connected.**

**For the duration (however long that may be)**

### **Sunday Worship is broadcast at 8:30 am.**

Bishop Tesch has suggested that Holy Communion be “paused.” By that he means that we stop Communion for now and resume when we can gather again. Some will (quite properly) choose to have communion at home. The “pause” will be a “Sabbath,” a time to reflect on how miraculous communion is.

It is painful to have to say that Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals will all have to be postponed, until they can be done properly. Choosing to ignore social distancing and going ahead with gatherings unnecessarily puts lives at risk.

The day for us to resume gatherings will come again, but (again our bishop) that day is not imminent.

People wish to help. As of now, staying home, helps. Praying, helps. Pray for yourself. Pray for your family. Pray for those who are homeless. Pray for those who do not have enough. Mailing in your offering, helps.

It is painful to have to say that Holy Week and Easter will have to be postponed or even canceled until next year. The gift of Resurrection; the gift of Pentecost will occur whether or not we observe a day.

### ***Christianity Has Been Handling Epidemics for 2000 Years.***

Author – Lyman Stone – March 30, 2020

The modern world has suddenly become reacquainted with the oldest traveling companion of human history: existential dread and the fear of unavoidable, inscrutable death. No vaccine or antibiotic will save us for the time being. Because this experience has become foreign to modern people, we are, by and large, psychologically and culturally underequipped for the current coronavirus pandemic.

To find the moral resources to tackle COVID-19, both its possible death toll and the fear that stalks our communities alongside the disease, we have to look at the resources built in the past. For me, that means examining how people of my tradition, Christians, and especially Lutherans, have handled the plagues of the past. And while people of all faiths, and none, are facing the disease, the distinctive approach to epidemics Christians have adopted over time is worth dusting off.

The Christian response to plagues begins with some of Jesus's most famous teachings: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"; "Love your neighbor as yourself"; "Greater love has no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friends." Put plainly, the Christian ethic in a time of plague considers that our own life must always be regarded as less important than that of our neighbor.

During plague periods in the Roman Empire, Christians made a name for themselves. Historians have suggested that the terrible Antonine Plague of the 2nd century, which might have killed off a quarter of the Roman Empire, led to the spread of Christianity, as Christians cared for the sick and offered an spiritual model whereby plagues were not the work of angry and capricious deities but the product of a broken Creation in revolt against a loving God.

But the more famous epidemic is the Plague of Cyprian, named for a bishop who gave a colorful account of this disease in his sermons. Probably a disease related to Ebola, the Plague of Cyprian helped set off the Crisis of the Third Century in the Roman world. But it did something else, too: It triggered the explosive growth of Christianity. Cyprian's sermons told Christians not to grieve for plague victims (who live in heaven), but to redouble efforts to care for the living. His fellow bishop Dionysius described how Christians, "Heedless of danger ... took charge of the sick, attending to their every need."

Nor was it just Christians who noted this reaction of Christians to the plague. A century later, the actively pagan Emperor Julian would complain bitterly of how "the Galileans" would care for even non-Christian sick people, while the church historian Pontianus recounts how Christians ensured that "good was done to all men, not merely to the household of faith." The sociologist and religious demographer Rodney Stark claims that death rates in cities with Christian communities may have been just half that of other cities.

This habit of sacrificial care has reappeared throughout history. In 1527, when the bubonic plague hit Wittenberg, Martin Luther refused calls to flee the city and protect himself. Rather, he stayed and ministered to the sick. The refusal to flee cost his daughter Elizabeth her life. But it produced a tract, "Whether Christians Should Flee the Plague," where Luther provides a clear articulation of the Christian epidemic response: We die at our posts. Christian doctors cannot abandon their hospitals; Christian governors cannot flee their districts; Christian pastors cannot abandon their congregations. The plague does not dissolve our duties: It turns them to crosses, on which we must be prepared to die.

For Christians, it is better that we should die serving our neighbor than surrounded in a pile of masks we never got a chance to use.

And if we care for each other, if we share masks and hand soap and canned foods, if we "are our brother's keeper," we might actually reduce the death toll, too. To modern people acquainted with the germ theory of disease, this can all sound a bit foolish. Caring for the sick sounds nice, but it's as likely to infect others as to save lives. In an intensely professionalized medical environment, should common people really assume a burden of care?

Here, a second element of the Christian approach appears: strict rules against suicide and self-harm. Our bodies are gifts from God and must be protected. Or, as Luther says in his essay on the topic, we must not "tempt God." The catechism Luther wrote for Christian instruction elaborates on the Fifth Commandment ("Though shalt not murder") by saying that this actually means we must never even endanger others through our negligence or recklessness. Luther's essay encourages believers to obey quarantine orders, fumigate their houses, and take precautions to avoid spreading the sickness.

The Christian motive for hygiene and sanitation does not arise in self-preservation but in an ethic of service to our neighbor. We wish to care for the afflicted, which first and foremost means not infecting the healthy. Early Christians created the first hospitals in Europe as hygienic places to provide care during times of plague, on the understanding that negligence that spread disease further was, in fact, murder.

Since religious bodies in South Korea, Singapore, Iran, Hong Kong, and even Washington, D.C., have been at the forefront of coronavirus transmission, this injunction is worth remembering. Motivated by this concern, I have prepared an exhaustive handbook for churches about how they can fortify their services to reduce coronavirus transmission, informed by guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and my experiences working as a missionary in Hong Kong. The first sacrifice Christians must make to care for our neighbor is our convenience, as we enthusiastically participate in aggressive sanitation measures and social distancing.

This kind of humble care for others is a powerful force. I've seen it at work in my neighbors in Hong Kong, whatever their beliefs. The ubiquitous surgical masks may not actually prevent infection, but they serve as a visible reminder that we're all watching each other's backs. When good sanitary procedure stops being about saving our own skin and starts being about loving our neighbor, it becomes not just life-saving but soul-enlivening.

But it's not that at all. The coronavirus leaves over 95 percent of its victims still breathing. But it leaves virtually every member of society afraid, anxious, isolated, alone, and wondering if anyone would even notice if they're gone. In an increasingly atomized society, the coronavirus could rapidly mutate into an epidemic of despair. Church attendance serves as a societal roll call, especially for older people: Those who don't show up should be checked on during the week. Bereft of work, school, public gatherings, sports and hobbies, or even the outside world at all, humans do poorly. We need the moral and mental support of communities to be the decent people we all aspire to be.

The Christian choice to defend the weekly gathering at church is not, then, a superstitious fancy. It's a clear-eyed, rational choice to balance trade-offs: We forgo other activities and take great pains to be as clean as possible so that we can meaningfully gather to support each other. Without this moral support, as the citizens of Wuhan, China, can attest—and perhaps soon the people of Italy—life can quickly become unendurable. Even non-Christians who eschew church-going can appreciate the importance of maintaining just one lifeline to a community of mutual care and support.



**President's Message**  
**Laura Rude**

Dear Zion Church Family-

I hope this letter finds you full of peace and hope. Many uncertainties right now but one thing is for certain. We are not alone! God is with us! God will guide us! God loves us unconditionally. He longs for us to love and praise Him in return and call on His Holy Name for strength and patience and healing!

I was reading recently in my Decision magazine a sermon from the great Billy Graham. I would like to share a piece of that sermon with you as it really spoke to me. In it he writes about 2 kinds of wisdom.

*"First, there is a wisdom that is God-given, a wisdom that, after the mind of Christ, views life in terms of eternity. Of this wisdom, the Scripture says, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17)*

*This God given wisdom is not brash, cynical or high-minded. Its roots are in Christ, and it is characterized by reverence, meekness and faith. Godly wisdom pulls all the meaningless pieces of life together and makes them fit! This is what we call understanding.*

*But worldly wisdom is entirely different. It is cunning, clever, subtle, and designing. It schemes, connives, and is motivated by animal instincts. The Bible warns about this kind of wisdom when it says, "In much worldly wisdom is much grief and he who increase knowledge increases sorrow." (Ecclesiastes 1:18)"*

I certainly hope that excerpt resonated with you as well. May all be seeking God's wisdom and grace as we face these uncertain times. Resting assured that God is good and faithful!

As most activities have been put on hold for now, please remember to reach out to each other for encouragement and pray for each other. Look for the daily miracles and blessings all around us.

The church council will meet again in early April to assess the situation. Any updates will be made to our website, social media, local media or feel free to call the church or reach out to me. For now, we plan on continuing our local broadcast on TV and Radio to stay connected. We are a family and together we will get through this and meet again soon!

Praying you seek God's wisdom. Stay healthy and keep the faith!

Serving humbly –  
Laura Rude



**We are trying to update Zion's Facebook page daily. Check it out. If you aren't on Facebook, consider giving it a try.**



## Madison Crane

Director of Children, Youth, and Families  
Zion and Redeemer Lutheran Churches

Peace to you amidst the unknowns in the world around us. As I look around and have many questions, I do a double take and see God's hand in all things. In this moment of distancing ourselves physically from one another, we have an opportunity to draw nearer to our heavenly Father and loving God. How? Through prayer, actions, and worship we draw nearer. A fantastic devotional for families in this time is *Pandemic Hope: A Family Devotional For Life During Covid19*. Throughout this there are opportunities to grow in faith with your family. Another great resource is the FREE downloadable app of Martin Luther's Small Catechism and over 500 years later we can still use that tool to understand our faith a bit more- just using technology a little bit differently than Martin Luther might have imagined!

**Handy** prayer ideas are: the 5-finger prayer!  
Each finger represents a person or people to pray for:

The thumb - Family and friends

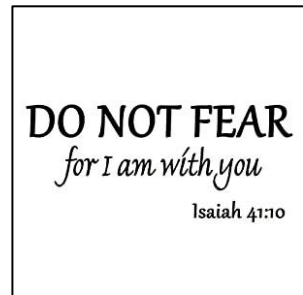
The pointer finger - People who point and give direction/guidance (leaders and teachers)

The index finger - People who stand tall in leadership position (those in government and authority)

The ring finger - People who are weak or sick

The pinky - Myself last

We each have a lot of impact. What also can be infectious in this time is kindness, healthy habits, and creative ways to bust the boredom or cabin fever. If your kids are missing their teachers- write them a letter to their school address. Another way to connect with someone is to give them a call and hear their voice in person! We were created to care for one another and the world around us. This time of being physically distant from one another is a challenge when we were created to make connections, but now is a time to draw nearer to our creator in the Word and prayer, have caring conversations with one another, and be patient and gracious with one another. That is how we must connect. Our God who created the heavens and earth and all the stars in the sky, knows how to care for each of us by holding us in His hands.



### Zion Lutheran's Parish Planning Council Minutes March 17, 2020

The Parish Planning council meeting was called to order by President Laura Rude at 5:31 p.m. In attendance were Laura Rude, Pastor John Golv, Pastor Ale Tulu, Barbara Overbye, Tim Numedahl, Penni Nelson, Madison Crane, Marijo Nabben, Mike Spears, Glenice Johnson, Lindsay Henrickson, Sharon Jorde, Dennis Yost, and Deb Holtan.

Pastor John led the group in prayer.

The minutes for the February 18, 2020 meeting were presented with the correction made under Pastor Ale's report. The month should have stated February not March for the Conference 2 meeting. A motion was made to accept the minutes with the said correction. The motion was approved.

**Treasurers Report:** The report was filed for audit.

No board reports were presented.

The council's contingency plan with the COVID-19 is to follow the Synod guideline from Bishop Tesch which was a recommendation to close the church. This includes no worship services or activities until further notice.

The council discussed options to continue with a broadcast. A regular service will be conducted with no congregation and at least for the upcoming Sunday the Holden Evening Prayer Service will be used. President Laura Rude said she would be willing to ask the Parish Nurse, Sandy Knutson to also speak during the upcoming Sunday broadcast on facts about the COVID-19 virus. Madison will still present a Children's Sermon. The offices will still be staffed but with minimal hours and staff. Phone numbers will be posted on the church office doors for emergencies. The number one concern is to keep our staff healthy.

An electronic sign was discussed. Properties Board was asked to explore the cost of a non digital sign with a light to illuminate it.

The "Green Space" was also discussed. To start with there will be a spring clean up, get grass planted and removal of tree stumps. Mike Spears suggested that the council meet again in two weeks to reassess what is happening because of the COVID-19. The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m. after saying the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by Deb Holtan, Council Secretary



Dear Church,

We live in anxious times. COVID-19 makes these times even more anxious. In a time of crisis, it is our natural instinct to gather together, but this pandemic demands that we distance ourselves from one another for a time. This has led to major disruptions to all aspects of our lives including corporate worship. There is discussion and experimentation with the celebration and distribution of Holy Communion.

This disruption may actually be of benefit to us. The world has hit the pause button and now we have time to reflect more deeply on the evangelical understanding of the Word that was recovered during the Reformation. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. The question should be turned around from, "How do we receive Holy Communion?" to "How does the Word of God come to us and how do we receive the

Word of God?" God comes to us in all these ways and is really present. Holy Communion is not the only way that the Word of God is communicated, not even the preeminent way that the Word of God is communicated.

This disruption also gives us the time and space to examine our understanding of and practices around Holy Communion. I grew up when communion was celebrated once a month. Now we have done such a good job of encouraging our people to receive the sacrament more frequently that many, if not most, of our congregations have weekly communion! Of course, the pandemic-forced physical distancing has interrupted this practice. But it hasn't separated us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:39) We don't know how long this pandemic will last, but it won't last forever. Fasting from Holy Communion for a time might be a good discipline. This absence makes God's presence more profound. During this limited fast we might become more aware of God's presence around us and in creation in ways we never noticed before.

We recommend that we do not urge people to employ virtual communion, that deacons, pastors, and bishops use this time as a teaching moment about the Lutheran understanding of the Word of God, that we make use of the Service of the Word and Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Night Prayer and Responsive Prayer, that we spend time in scripture study, that we pray for each other, and that we contact others regularly by phone, email, or social media. We also recommend that we be gentle with one another. We've never been here before. We are all trying to do our best to be faithful and loving in this time of COVID-19.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton