



## The Herald

Published monthly, to provide both  
inspiration and information on  
the activities of the Zion Family

Zion Lutheran Church  
505 Main Ave. N.  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701-1996  
Phone - 218-681-3296



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**No. 5**

*Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Romans 12:12*

Dear friends in Christ,

It has been over six weeks since we have been gathered at our church for worship as a congregation. Since then, life has completely changed as we know it and worship has been only through social Medias. As a result, many of us haven't seen each other, and I have been wondering how you are doing in this difficult time when we all are told to avoid contact and stay at home? How are you dealing with this unusual way of life when many people are living with fear and uncertainty of the coronavirus? If you feel discouraged and frightened, it is my prayer that you don't lose hope.

The bible tells us in many places about people of faith who lived through very difficult times and who maintained hope in hopeless situations. One of those people is the prophet Habakkuk. Here is what he said in his book in chapter 3:17, "Even though the fig trees have no fruit and no grapes grow on vines, Even though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no grain, Even though the sheep all die and the cattle stalls are empty, I will still be joyful and glad, because the lord God is my savior."

What the prophet of God is saying is that no matter how hard life gets, he would still remain hopeful and optimistic about what lies ahead because of his faith in the lord. The prophet Habakkuk words reminds me of these three famous lines found scratched in to a wall at Auschwitz, during the Second World War "I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when I don't feel it. I believe in God even when he is silent."

These words remind us how other people of faith had endured extreme trials in their own times and lived with the ray of hope in those dark times. What about us? How can we keep our spirit up in these difficult days? We do it by living in faith like they did. So don't lose hope my friends no matter how the days ahead seem difficult.

I hope and pray that it won't be long before these challenging days are over and we come back to our church and worship with our church family. Until then, may the lord watch over you and your loved ones and keep you safe. Amen!

Pastor Ale

## **Farewell, Pastor John**

*When his time of service was ended he went to his home. Luke 1:23*

For the past nine and half years Pastor John Golv served our congregations as our senior pastor. Zion and Silver Creek Lutheran Churches were the ninth and tenth congregations that he served in his thirty- eight years of ordained ministry.

It has been a great privilege for me to work side by side with him as an associate pastor. I enjoyed the ministry I shared with him. There were times when we didn't see eye to eye with some issues and had our differences. That happens in any working relationships especially when one works for such a long time together. But the fact is that he was a wonderful person to work with and easy to get along with. I have learned a great deal from his leadership and one of the things I appreciated most is that he did his work with great integrity and dedication. He exercised his leadership with humility and compassion. He treated his staff and his church members with respect and kindness. That was a kind of person he was. For that, we are very grateful to him and to our God who sent him our way to lead us in our journey of faith for those past nine and half years.

Thank you, Pastor John, for your great leadership and your faithful ministry. We wish you and Cathy every blessing a good life has to offer. Enjoy your retirement years with your family and friends. Remember us in your prayers and we will do the same.

With gratitude

Pastor Ale

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Reception in Pastor John's honor tentatively set for June 14

### Rev. John L. Golv - 1982 – 2020

The strongest need I have in my last few weeks in Thief River Falls is the need to offer personal, heartfelt gratitude. I find that I am unable to offer complete thanks where complete thanks is due. I never will be finished with that task.

Having said that, more gratitude than can be expressed well is due to Cathy. But, my genuine gratitude is what I can give. Through my emotional, professional, physical, and financial ups and downs she has been unfailingly constant.

Faith in God has carried us our married life.

The glorious musical tradition of the Christian Church is endlessly inspirational and instructive. It always has the potential for surprising emotional and revelatory power. Instrumental trends come and go. Hymn preferences come and go. The Source is constant.

John 1:14 has always been revelatory and inspirational for me. To see Jesus is to see God. To hear Jesus is to hear God. One of the incarnational miracles is this: our words can communicate God's Word. These words do what they say. The book most responsible for performative language is this: *Introduction To A Theological Theory of Language*, by Gerhard Ebeling.

The people of **Rhame**, North Dakota, (1982 – 1986) and the members of First and Bethany Lutheran were patient with me, a young man, in my first call, a recent graduate of Luther Seminary. My head was full of academic theology. I learned (eventually) that these congregations would do what was important to me, after I became important to them. I was determined to do well for them. I was not aware of how patient they were, and had to be, at the time. Our first, Michael, was born in Hettinger, ND.

The people of **Alvarado**, MN, (1986 – 1990) and the members of New Hope Lutheran, were led by a council that was too far out in front of the congregation. They have their new building now, though I had no part in it. I learned that members determined to fight, will fight. Two of the hardest funerals I ever had, were here. I saw that even the most persistent ethnic traditions, fade. The "New Church" (ELCA) began in 1988. Our second and third, Sarah and Christopher, were born at United Hospital, Grand Forks, ND.

The people of **Hampton**, Iowa, (1990 – 1995) and the members of St. Paul Lutheran Church were at a high point in their journey. One service was not enough. Of the many good memories there one reaction to a sermon is one I will always treasure. After worship on the way out an English teacher looked me in the eyes and said, "...comes the poet." I learned (I hope) that Christian Stewardship is a matter of faith. Our three children started school here.

The **Northeastern Iowa Synod**, (1995 - 2000) and Bishop Steven Ullestad had to adjust to changing patterns of financial support. They did. Cathy & I bought our first house in Waterloo; I worked at the synod office in Waverly. The most effective congregational stewardship program in the history of the Lutheran Church, *Consecration Sunday*, was in its hey-day at the time. Dramatic successes using this program had the effect of making the new Director of Stewardship Education look good. There were several professional highlights during those few years.

At Trinity Lutheran in **Lindstrom**, MN (2001 – 2009) Cathy and I experienced the challenging side of ordained life. After a fire, a large narthex area was added to the building, designed by the same architect that remodeled this beautiful Swedish building. The Associate Pastor had to leave under difficult circumstances. I learned what an "after-pastor" was. The organ contained some of the principal chorus from the Schlicker in Boe Chapel at St. Olaf College. My book, *Our Stewardship*, part of Augsburg's Congregational Leadership Series, was published in 2002. Our children graduated from high school here. Our daughter Sarah met her future husband here.

There were interim ministries at Christiania Lutheran, south of Lakeville MN, the Holt/Newfolden parish, and Peace Lutheran in Fargo.

Zion Lutheran in **Thief River Falls**, MN (10/10/2010 – 4/19/2020) brought several aspects of life full circle. One of the former senior pastors at Trinity, TRF was a man by the name of Gjermund (Jerry) Thompson. I got to know him in his retirement home in Northfield, MN. I could not have known then that his son David, then Associate Pastor at St. John's Lutheran (in Northfield), who grew up in Thief River Falls, would be the one to ordain me at First Lutheran in Brookings, SD. David was a graduate of Lincoln High School, as was Paul Sponheim, one of the most brilliant teachers and examples of faith that I have ever known.

Cathy and I have lived in Thief River Falls longer than any other place that we have ever lived.

From Zion Lutheran I learned again what good people Christians can be. I learned again that God is at work in visible and non-visible ways. I learned again that God's Word has the power to do what it says. I learned again (grudgingly) that it is not enough to do good work, it is also necessary to be seen to be doing good work.

Over and over again I have had to relearn that it is only too easy to get completely caught up in everyday matters. Opinions come and go. Points of view come and go. So do controversies, and arguments, and evaluations. God's promises are constant.

A colleague always began a new congregational ministry by saying publicly: "I will disappoint you." To those I have disappointed I sincerely apologize. His comment does of course work both ways. As far as I am concerned all of that is past, forgotten and forgiven.

*The Theodicy Question* (How is it that God is good, given the existence of evil?)

This question has been painful life-long. I have never heard or read a satisfying answer. Experiences in ministry have forced the question in bald, supremely painful ways. There have been times when God seemed far away, or absent altogether. I have officiated at or attended funerals for children. The spiritual urge to try to make sense of these tragedies (especially for the parents and the preacher) can be overwhelming. The search for an answer to the question "why" has led me to several responses. None of the responses is sufficient. None of them take the (very nearly unbearable) pain away. These are the responses that upheld me. The first one is best (for me). This is God's answer to Paul's prayer in 2 Corinthians 12:9: "...my grace is sufficient for you." Another is the answer that Job heard when he wondered why. The answer he got from God, (paraphrased), was "Who are you to ask?" The third response: when bad things happen; God makes introductions. Exodus 20:2 is also an answer. I believe today that there is no satisfying answer to a question that may not be ours to ask.

I have seen again and again that faithful people do survive what seems unsurvivable at the time. The Gospel prevails. Life with God does continue. Blessings do continue. None of us lives on alone, ever.

In all: **37** and a half years; **5** congregations; **1** position shared equally with Churchwide's Division for Congregational Ministry, Lutheran Social Service of Iowa, and the Northeastern Iowa Synod; eventually Churchwide's Division for Outreach was added; **3** interim ministries; **6** associate pastors; **7** youth directors; and many, many good and faithful people.

I will retire after worship on Sunday, April 19, 2020, with gratitude to all.

At the end of one ministry is usually the prospect of another. I have had last Sundays several times. This time however there is no new call to describe. I will begin another phase of ministry in the name of Jesus Christ, but not a parish ministry. May God bless you all.

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Our plan for the next two years is to join Redeemer. Please do not ask me to "come back" in order to do pastoral acts here. Asking will force me to say no, which I have no wish to do. When Cathy retires (in two years) we hope to move to a coop style home, near our grandchildren, in Cambridge, MN.

### **Contact Information**

Spring, Summer, Fall  
29846 County Road 37  
Laporte, MN 56461  
218 224 2777

Winter  
826 Crocker Avenue South #1  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
218 683 5181

### **FINANCES**

Average weekly giving/income needed to cover budgeted expenses- \$7,493.

Average weekly giving/income thru April 30, 2020 \$6,905.

Current budget shortfall as of April 30, 2020 \$23,698.

Electronic giving: Vanco (sign on up on our website)

Mail checks to: Zion Lutheran Church 505 Main Ave N, Thief River Falls, MN 56701

*Because Zion is down to one Pastor as of May 1<sup>st</sup> there will be a reduction in payroll and benefit expenses of approx. \$9,000. monthly. The council decided not to apply for the Payroll Protection Program money. Our convictions were strong that this money was better left for other businesses and churches. Our congregation is faithful in their stewardship and the commitment to Zion's ministry is recognized and appreciated. We thank you in advance for your prayerful consideration of future contributions.*

**God's Work. Our Hands.**



## President's Message

Hello Church Family,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits, filled with peace knowing we serve a RISEN SOVERIGN GOD!

Words are important. Some words can have many different meanings. Some words can easily be taken out of context. Words can be mispronounced, misspelled and misused. You know what Word is perfect? God's Word. It does not change. It always speaks the truth and fills us with the promise of God's love and faithfulness. Can I get an AMEN?!? More and more these days people are looking for meaning and hope for a better tomorrow. I'm so thankful that I know where my help and hope comes from. It's not from having enough toilet paper, hand sanitizer and bleach wipes on hand.

Change is something that we can certainly count on in life. Whether we like it not, it's all around us. I keep telling myself that without change, we would not have butterflies! Think about that! Zion is no exception to changes. We have been dealing with a lot of it lately and the decisions are not always easy. The Parish Planning Council is looking for your feedback to help us make some of these decisions as we look to align ourselves with a future vision for Zion. A Transition Committee is being formed to help gather feedback from Zion members. We would like to start and complete this initiative over the next couple of months. Details are still being fine-tuned but members of this committee will be instrumental in deciding the best way to move forward. We want to ensure that we are giving all our members an opportunity to share their thoughts and to gather as much information as possible for a long-term vision of Zion's ministry. At the heart of that ministry will always be God's Truth and Love. If you are interested or have questions or someone that you know would be great at this, please reach out to me or the church office.

The biggest question on people's mind right now is, "When will things get back to normal?" No one knows for sure, but it will eventually happen. Some things will go back to normal quicker than others. Worship services may be one of those that will be awhile yet. We are in continued communication with the Synod regarding what "getting back to church" will look like. Please read the Bishop's letter that is included in the newsletter. Zion's leaders will be thoughtful in putting a plan together, using the resources and recommendations provided. Our main concern is the health of our congregation. Please check our website, Facebook pages or listen to our broadcasts to stay informed on the latest.

Remember that God doesn't change who He is times of trials. Sometimes the outcome is good, and sometimes it is not, but it doesn't change who God is. Remain in His Word and stay faithful in His work.

We may not be together, but our ministry is very strong! Let your Light shine in the darkness!

God be with you~

Laura Rude - C# 218-684-1072

## Madison Crane

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

Peace to you! If you've ever seen *Home Alone 2*, as one of the criminals is in the basement he had just fallen to, and he looks up and says, "WOW! What a hole!" I feel like I'm saying "WOW! What a year!" with the same tone of awe and bewilderment. (Let's not forget the snowflakes that flew Easter morning...) As the snow has taken it's time to melt, and the grass timidly turns green, I look around and wonder what is going on on God's earth?

Well, the canals in Italy are returning to calmness and beauty without the constant stirring of human hustle. Did you know the bear population may be a peak in National Parks like Yosemite? And with less air pollution from vehicle emission, the skylines are clearing up! I know God's hand is in all things. There is nothing in this chaos that our God does not notice.

As Pastor John has retired, I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with him for the last few months of his ministry. His lessons taught could not have come at a better time for reflection! Wisdom and communication are always necessary but in this time, it is especially necessary. We seek wisdom from our Heavenly Father and can do so in



communicating with Him. Parts of communication are listening and speaking. God gives us two ears and one mouth, and I have a good feeling it's so we listen twice as hard! May we draw nearer to God by lifting up everything that is on our hearts, when words are hard and you don't know what to say, we were taught the Lord's Prayer.

Peace and have hope,

Madison Crane

## Youth Happenings:

- First Communion: Date TBD Fall of 2020
- Senior Recognition Sunday: TBD August, 2020
- We will resume our activities in person and functioning as it is deemed safe and we will be in communication about that! Check out the websites or your email for updates!
- I am in the office at Zion on Tuesday and Redeemer on Thursday from 9-3. I will be available via email Tuesday-Friday. As of Monday, April 20th I will not be in the offices on Mondays through the summer.
- Pathways has not altered their plans for public knowledge, as of right now.



Zion has distributed 680 handmade masks to the Thief River Falls and surrounding communities. The women of Zion and the Mask Makers of the Thief River Falls Community Pandemic Group have worked hard to maintain this supply. These women have truly been rock stars, and we are so blessed to have these angels among us. These women could use a breather, so if there is anyone out there who would like to sew masks, Darlene Hulteen has kits that contain all the supplies and would love to share them. Call her or the church office for more information.

**We will continue to distribute masks to the community on Monday's from 2:00-4:00. Please enter the parking lot from Main Street and exit in the alley.**

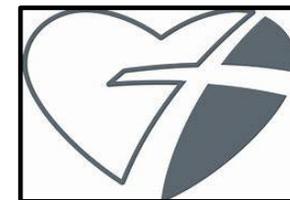
The best way to launder masks is to wash them in warm, soapy dishwater, rinse them thoroughly and dry them on a flat surface. When they are dry, either iron them as an extra precaution to kill the Covid19 virus or put them in a hot dryer for 10-15 minutes.

Stay safe. Stay well. Remember to wash your hands often, wear your mask when out in public and practice social distancing.

Sandy Knutson, Parish Nurse

## Thank you Thrivent

The Thief River Falls Community Pandemic Group has received three Thrivent Action grants to help purchase supplies for making masks. If you have Thrivent insurance and qualify for such a grant, please call Darlene Hulteen for information.



## Men's Breakfast Group

The Men's Breakfast group has just slightly less funds than last year to donate to the same recipients as before.  
Please call or email Winton Forsberg with your thoughts.  
[winton@mncable.net](mailto:winton@mncable.net) - 681-2311



## Zion Lutheran's Parish Planning Council Minutes April 4, 2020

The Parish Planning council meeting was called to order by President Laura Rude at 9:08 a.m.

In attendance were Laura Rude, Pastor John Golv, Tim Numedahl, Barbara Overbye, Madison Crane, Sharon Jorde, Glenice Johnson, Mike Spears, Marijo Nabben, Penni Nelson and Deb Holtan.

Pastor John led with devotions and a prayer.

The minutes from the March 17, 2020 meeting were presented. A motion was made to accept the minutes as printed. The motion was seconded and approved.

The Treasurers Report was filed for audit.

It was decided there would be no services for Maundy Thursday, or Good Friday. There will be no Good Friday Prayer Vigil.

Penni Nelson reported that Silver Creek will not have any services until further notice.

The celebration to honor Pastor John's retirement will be scheduled at a later date when it is safe for us to gather as a larger group. Pastor Bob Dahlen will be giving the sermon on Sunday April 19th which is Pastor John's last day. Bishop Bill Tesch will also be present. Madison will give the Children's Sermon.

Madison reported that it has been tricky to connect with the youth. She doesn't want to overwhelm them because of their schoolwork. But Madison also reported she's had positive feedback from the parents.

The Contingency Plan due to Covid-19 will continue until further notice.

The council will meet again in two weeks.

The meeting adjourned after praying the Lord's Prayer at 10:34

Respectfully submitted by  
Deb Holtan Council Secretary



**Zion Lutheran's Parish Planning Council Minutes**  
**April 21, 2020**

The Parish Planning Council meeting was called to order by President Laura Rude at 5:31 pm.

In attendance were Laura Rude, Pastor Ale, Tim Numedahl, Madison Crane, Mike Spears, Glenice Johnson, Marijo Nabben, Dennis Yost, Sharon Jorde, Penni Nelson and Deb Holtan.

Pastor Ale opened with a word of prayer.

The minutes from the April 4, 2020 meeting were presented. A motion was made to accept the minutes as printed. The motion was seconded and approved.

There was no Treasurers Report.

President Laura Rude stated that there was a transition meeting between Pastor John and Pastor Ale. Beside the two pastors, Laura Rude, Madison Crane, Linda Hamrick and Tim Numedahl were also present. Madam President stated that the Boards will have to be mindful of Pastor Ale's time to work out time schedules that will fit with Pastor Ale's schedule. Madison will now report to Pastor Ale on a weekly basis to start with.

An Exit Interview was done with Pastor John. Laura Rude and Tim Numedahl were present for this interview. Kristen Osterkamp facilitated the interview.

The Contingency Plan during the Covid-19 will continue. The Facebook streaming of the Sunday services has had good feedback. The council feels that we need to follow the Governors and the Synod's guidelines. The office hours will continue the same until May 4th and beyond if necessary with adjustments made as needed.

Discussion was held about putting together packets for the Sunday school children and Confirmation kids. It was suggested that the Confirmation Leaders could help set up an outreach of some kind where there is approximately a half hour of interaction whether it's with a phone call or a virtual call. It was also suggested that Pastor Ale join in on the outreach so a connection can be made with him and the children/kids as well.

An outreach to the graduating seniors was also brought up to connect with each at graduation time. There is hope that there can be a "Send Off" party for the seniors in early August. First Communion classes and the service will be rescheduled for the fall of 2020. Pathway has not yet altered their plans for this summer. Madison will be alternating Sundays to give the Children's Sermons since Redeemer is not holding Wednesday night services during this time. The 2nd and 4th Sundays will be at Zion and the 1st and 3rd Sundays will be at Redeemer. If there is a fifth Sunday, it will be determined at that time which church Madison will be at. As of April 1st, Madison will be taking Monday's off.

The Newsletter will be postponed until some time after May 4th. The council would like to see the seniors recognized in the May Newsletter. Suggestions were a picture of the graduate with a short bio. Tradition has been to present each graduating senior with a tied fleece blanket made by someone from the congregation. Glenice Johnson has bought fleece for these blankets if any one needs and will be the person to contact.

The council also discussed having an Interim Pastor. Kathy Levenhagen is our "go to person" at the Synod. It is the councils feeling that we need help as we go through this transitional period and would like input from the congregation.

The council will meet again in two weeks with the day and time to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 pm after praying the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by  
Deb Holtan Council Secretary



**Northwestern Minnesota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders..., And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider him..., so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." – Hebrews 12:1-3*

Dear Partners in God's Mission,

My hope with this letter is that we might come to shared expectations for the broadest outline of how returning to in-person worship will unfold along with the values that will guide it. We are developing more detailed guidance for that time when we can begin to work our way back to in-person worship in phases, and I expect this guidance will be ready later this week. In the meantime, let's come together on the basic understandings that will underpin this process.

The writer of Hebrews encouraged a community of beleaguered and persecuted Christians to persevere in the difficult race set before them: continuing to live as followers of Jesus in extraordinary times. The difficulty of their race was not just keeping faith, it was keeping it in a time and place that felt alien to their values and hopes. The world was not as they wanted it to be, and that made faithfulness even harder. Can you relate?

I am reminded of a scene happening every day at U.S. military installations. Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines take an annual fitness test which concludes with a 1.5 or 2-mile run to be accomplished within an age-adjusted time (a benefit to us old-timers!). When the fast runners cross the finish-line they circle back to run with struggling comrades offering encouragements like, "You're doing great! You're almost there! Great work! Keep running!"

Dear Siblings – may you hear the voices of the great cloud of witnesses, led by none other than our risen Lord Jesus, that swift one who ran before us, that "pioneer and perfecter of our faith," all of them running beside you saying, "You're doing great! Great work! Keep running!"

It's true. You *are* doing great! You are adapting to find ways to share the good news and serve your neighbors amidst great challenges. You are utilizing time and space at home to seek God in new ways through scripture and prayer. Some of you are risking your life to care for the sick or to ensure basic services. You are being generous even amidst financial challenges. You are finding ways to share your faith with the click of a button! Great work! Keep running!

And while there is a finish line in this race, it's still a ways off. You may have noticed that in the list of encouragements from Jesus and the cloud of witnesses I left one out: "You're almost there!" ***The truth is that here in Minnesota we are NOT almost ready to return to gathering in worship again the way we did before March 14<sup>th</sup>*** when public health restrictions began in Minnesota.

So, on the next page are the affirmations that I believe we should share as we begin to consider the long process of returning to in-person worship.

- Our motivation to do this slowly, correctly and safely is our faith and our values:
  - We trust that God is at work in God's word - creating faith, forgiving sins, bringing life and salvation – whether that word is being heard by someone sitting in one of our churches or by someone sitting at home watching YouTube or Facebook Live. We are confident that God will be God and that God cares about the church even more than we do, so our decisions need not be driven by fear or reckless anxiety.
  - Our values of faithfulness in relationship, authenticity in our welcome and love that makes a difference are guiding our decision to stay home and will guide our decisions around re-gathering, too. We are staying home now, not out of fear, but out of love for our neighbor and out of our desire to keep faith with the people God has given us to care for. Those will be the values that guide our return as well.
- The risks are real.
  - We passed a deadly milestone: [65,000 deaths in the U.S. from CoVID19](#). That's more deaths from this novel virus than ever recorded from influenza since the great pandemic of 1919 - and we have not yet reached the half-way point. This is not just a bad flu season.
  - The low numbers of positive tests in some of our counties does not mean that the risk of transmission is low. [The high percent of asymptomatic infections](#) (at least 25%, probably higher), coupled with the high threshold of symptoms required before one can be tested, combine to suggest that the true number of cases is much higher.
  - The disease is deadly for all ages, but especially for people over 60 and/or with underlying health conditions.

- What we are doing is working!
  - We stay home NOT to stop the pandemic – we can't. We do it to limit the pace of infections so that our health care system does not become overwhelmed. This is working! You are modeling this behavior in your communities and doing it out of love for your neighbor, because that's what followers of Jesus do! Thank you.
- Faith communities will not be the first or even the second ones to go back.

As you can see from the Governor's illustration, faith communities are somewhere in the middle of this process, and will go back, in phases, only when certain benchmarks have been achieved related to testing and numbers of new cases. We are not there yet and will not be for a while.

- We went into this quickly and together, but we will come out of it differently.
- We went from no restrictions to 250 in worship to 50 to 10 to only those needed to create digital services in just two weeks. According the CDC and the White House's guidance, the path back will be much slower.
- Size and demographics will determine when congregations can start re-gathering. Smaller, younger communities will start earlier than larger and/or older ones. While we are regathering, all the social distancing, sanitizing, mask wearing and other safe practices will apply, and will for some time.
- At-risk populations will be the last to return to public, face-to-face activities.

*Here is what I ask of you at this moment...*

- Breathe in, breathe out. This will be a slow process. For most of us, in-person gatherings are likely months, rather than weeks away.
- Work together. Please do not leave the decisions around how your community will re-gather to the rostered minister alone, but please do include your rostered minister in your decision-making process. Take into consideration the risks posed to staff who are required to be present and modify your plans accordingly. Make this a collaborative process.
- Form a smart team to advise you on your plan for returning. Include people from your community who work in public health or safety. Use the same adaptive creativity you have been using these weeks and months to move ahead safely and responsibly.
- Keep praying!

Know that you continue to be daily in my prayers. It is a joy and a privilege to serve with you. Thank you for your good and faithful leadership at this time.

In Christ our Brother,



Pastor Bill Tesch

Bishop of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

**m** Safely adjusting the dials



**SAFE PRACTICES ON**

- Wash your hands often
- Stay home when sick
- Social distance yourself

**COVID-19 RESPONSE ON**

- Test symptomatic individuals
- Isolate positive cases and contact trace
- Protect those at heightened risk
- Build needed hospital capacity
- Procure critical care supplies