

May 13, 2020

Fellow Redeemed,

It is my prayer that your faith was strengthened during the last two months. I know that my faith was challenged at times, proven at others and then ultimately shown as genuine through God's Word and Holy Spirit, but only by the work of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Isn't it awesome that we keep coming back to Him?

During these last two months, I found myself wondering what I could do, should do, or even was expected to do. It was at those times that my faith was challenged. Faith is challenged when we think we are in control. During these last two months, I found myself letting go of any desire to try to control what was going on and just place everything in the Lord's hands. It was during these times that my faith was proven. Faith is proven when we allow God to be in control and get out of His way. During these last two months, I found myself in God's Word, searching, learning, being strengthened, and having my eyes open to what God is doing right now. Faith is genuine when God's Word is preeminent and first in our lives.

I have to say right here, how proud I am of all of you, the members of Christ the Redeemer. Your faith during these last two months has been inspiring. I was worried that not meeting together on Sundays might cause us to neglect our community. I discovered that just the opposite was true. I know that this pandemic has brought us closer together. Can you believe that? While socially distancing we have been brought closer together, in and through faith. The longing that we are experiencing for each other is the product of the faith that God has produced in us through His Holy Spirit. What an amazing God we have.

It is now time for us to regather together around God's Word and Sacraments. As we do this, there are new challenges that await us and new "laws", "regulations", and "expectations" that will need our attention. Don't let these new "laws" get in the way of the need to express the Gospel. What do I mean? It's simple. Let the Gospel of forgiveness go before us in all situations, so that we are quick to forgive and slow to judge others. As we regather, we have put into place some items that are recommended by the CDC, the City of Tulsa, and the State of Oklahoma.

The following is a small synopsis of what you can expect in the coming weeks:

### **Education**

Even though we know it is important to continue lifetime Christian education, due to limitations set forth by the state and local governments we will have to make concessions in the foreseeable future. Many of us were already anticipating changes due to the upcoming building project, and this has just sped many of those changes along.

- In order to maintain proper social distancing, we will not offer any 9:30 AM Education Hour classes for any age group.
- The church Fellowship Hall will remain closed off and there will not be donuts or coffee.
- Elementary age Children's Sunday School will continue to be available online each week through the CTR website.
- Jr High (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) Sunday School will be on Zoom each Sunday at 10:00 AM.

- High School Fellowship will be on Zoom every other Wednesday at 5:30 PM.

### **Family and Children's Ministry**

We will work to provide some fellowship opportunities as allowed. In the meantime, we will continue online fellowship, as well as activities that are within state and local guidelines, as well as within the parameters of safety as far as construction is concerned.

- Per state guidelines there will be no church nursery available for the entirety of Sunday mornings. The church will also not be able to provide diapers, wipes, etc.
- Children's Worship Bags will be available in paper bags marked with the date to pick up each week in the Narthex. They will contain the weekly children's bulletin and activity sheets for a variety of age groups, as well as a fruit snack. Please do not return bags to the table after service, they are yours to keep. Please bring your own crayons or disposable 4-packs will be provided. Infant bags will not be provided at this time.
- If your family cannot or is choosing not to attend on Sundays and you would like the children's bulletin and activities mailed to you, please email [Suzanne.watt@ctrtulsa.org](mailto:Suzanne.watt@ctrtulsa.org) to request that.

### **Youth**

We will work to provide some youth fellowship opportunities, as allowed. In the meantime, we will continue online fellowship, as well as activities that are within state and local guidelines, as well as within the parameters of safety as far as construction is concerned.

- Due to the upcoming construction project, the gym is no longer available for play or gatherings. Please do not enter the gym space.
- Due to social distancing guidelines, the Youth Room and Jr High Room will not be available for "hang outs" or snacks before or after services.

### **Music**

Sacred music is a vital and essential part of Christian worship, particularly in the Lutheran tradition. As we begin to gather for in-person services, we will continue to incorporate music into the worship life of the congregation; however, in light of guidelines and limitations put forth by local and federal governments, as well as various healthcare professionals, the ways that we share music as a community of believers will, of necessity, temporarily be altered out of concern for the physical wellbeing of those who gather for worship.

- We will, for the time being, forgo congregational singing. Singing in large groups, even among assemblies who have properly observed social distancing precautions, has been found to be a risk factor in the transmission of illness. A study published in the *American Review of Respiratory Disease* found that because of the physical mechanics of singing, it can release nearly six times as many aerosol particles as speaking at a normal conversational volume does. This is of particular concern in spaces that are not well ventilated, as the particles may remain in the air for an extended period of time and can actually be recirculated into the room through HVAC systems in some cases.
- Any vocal or instrumental music that is incorporated into the services, including the primary musical parts of the Ordinary of the Divine Service (Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei) will be done by a soloist or cantor from the balcony.

- In an effort to continue to include the great hymns of the faith in our corporate worship, instrumental settings of hymns which reflect the liturgical and pericopal themes of the day will be presented in places where congregational hymns would normally be sung. The text of selected hymn stanzas will be included in the bulletin in conjunction with the playing of the hymn setting or improvisation as an aid to reflection and meditation on the textual themes of the hymn. It is hoped that this approach to hymnody, although no substitute for joining together in song, will encourage members to hear and understand hymns in a new way.
- Due to the logistical difficulties attendant in following social distancing guidelines in the context of musical rehearsals, the various musical ensembles that comprise the music ministry of Christ the Redeemer are temporarily suspending all regularly scheduled rehearsals.

As we as a congregation move forward in the days and weeks to come, we ask that everyone apply mercy and grace to each and every situation. You may not agree with some of the decisions that have been made, and that's ok. You may even feel very strongly that, somehow, the church is moving in a "wrong" direction, and that's ok, too. It is during times like these that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is of utmost importance. Christians who are quick to forgive, eager to listen and long to love are those in whom faith has been created by their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Please pray for the staff here at CTR and for each other, as we move into a new phase of normal for society, our community, and for the Christian Church on earth.

May God direct us, always according to His Word. Amen!

Rev. Scott Burmeister