

March 17, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7

It was the hope that during the outbreak of COVID 19, also known as the Coronavirus, that we would be able to continue to meet at the church for the confession and forgiveness of our sins, the reading and hearing of God’s Word and receiving Jesus in, with and under the elements of bread and wine (grape juice) at Holy Communion. Unfortunately, news continues to worsen regarding the spread of this virus. Public gatherings of more than 10 people are being strongly discouraged. As a result, and out of Christian love for you, our brothers and sisters in Christ, the council announces that all church activities: Bible study, Sunday school, Mid-week Lenten services and the Sunday service on March 22nd are cancelled. The council will re-evaluate the schedule on March 30th.

On Sunday, March 29th we will have a Drive in Theatre style service. Parishioners (and visitors) are invited to come to the church parking lot and remain in their cars for the service with the windows down. Pastor Mark will be using the sound system that is used for the Lakeside services. We are also looking into the possibility of a limited broadcast on a certain frequency on your car radio. You would still need to be at the church property as we would not have much range in broadcasting ability.

Additionally, Pastor Mark will record a sermon for Sunday, March 22nd that can be shared on social media such as Facebook, YouTube and our church website.

Unfortunately, this change in schedule will mean a postponement of our farewell gathering for Charlotte. We are making every effort to reschedule this once it is safe for larger public gatherings.

Please know that while our normal schedule is disrupted the expenses of the church continue. To that end, please remember to mail your offerings to the church as you are able. The mailing address for the church is P.O. Box 363, Elmer, New Jersey, 08318.

During this time of imposed distancing, please reach out via email, text, phone, skype, etc. to neighbors. This can be a lonely and difficult time. As the body of Christ that calls Emanuel our church home, it is important that we keep in touch to pray for and with one another. Also, as most nursing homes are closed to visitors, please consider sending cards to our shut-ins.

Pastor Mark is available for visits and to bring Holy Communion to those who desire. Please let him know if you or a loved one is hospitalized, and every effort will be made to visit.

There is a resource that has been developed for individuals and families. A few years ago, the NALC with Sola Publishing launched “Holy Families: Discipleship Resources for the Home”. There are FREE resources for daily prayers, blessings, Scripture readings, Children’s pages, Parent’s pages and a whole lot more. You can find these resources at www.holyfamilytime.com.

Please know that this is not a decision that was made lightly. It was one that is necessary for the well-being of all members of Emanuel. We certainly long for the days when our lives will return to some semblance of normalcy.

Heavenly Father: Hear our prayers for all who are sick and fighting illnesses. Grant to them a full and quick recovery. Hear our prayers for those who are grieving. Comfort them with the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Hear our prayers for all workers in the healing vocations. They bare great risk in caring for the sick. Shield them from illness, grant them peace in their work. Hear our prayers for our government leaders, that they may have wisdom in decision making. Hear our prayers for those who's jobs are uncertain in these days. Grant that they may have the financial resources to provide for their families. All these things and whatever else you see that we need, grant to us through Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

God bless,
Pastor Mark and the Council of Emanuel Lutheran Church