

**Dear congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church,**

If you haven't already heard, St. John's is suspending worship services and other gatherings until April 5, Palm Sunday. This is in response to the threat of the corona virus outbreak and the disease it causes known as covid-19.

St. John's, along with congregations throughout our synod, is complying with the strong recommendations of our governor, our bishops, and the Center for Disease Control to limit group assemblies in an effort to reduce the spread of this disease.

These are unprecedented measures taken in response to real concerns, especially for those most at risk, our elderly and vulnerable folks. That said, I pray that we do not fall victim to undue panic. This period of restricted assembly will end. Life will return to its more normal rhythms. We will gather, once again, to sing and pray and greet one another with a real handshake and the peace of Christ.

**In the meantime:**

In the meantime, you can find on our webpage the lessons for each Sunday, a script of the sermon for that Sunday, the prayers of the church, and other resources to keep us connected in spirit, if not in person. In addition, I will record a video weekly address. You will find that link on St. John's webpage as well. (<https://www.stjohnsbaroda.com/>)

In the meantime, I ask you to pray for one another, especially our ill and normally homebound members. Pray for the healthcare workers who are daily doing all they can to help the sick and injured. Pray for our governmental leaders who seek to act with prudence without panic. Pray for those who continue to staff food pantries and shelters. Pray for our church leaders, our bishops and pastors, who seek to guide us through this difficult season of uncertainty.

In the meantime, I ask that we be mindful of those least able to weather the economic impact of this epidemic, those who will lose jobs and income and those who struggle the added burden of child care as schools and daycare centers close. Our food pantries and help centers are going to require additional resources to cope with the added needs in our community. Again, watch the St. John's website for links to help centers.

In the meantime, if you need to reach me directly, do not hesitate to call: 269-615-1613

I look forward to meeting with all of you again to complete our Lenten journey together and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In the mean – time, the always time between the resurrection of our Lord and fulness of God's reign, may the peace of the Lord be with you.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis Smith". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large 'D' and 'S'.

Pastor Dennis smith