

Dear People of Immanuel,

With the outbreaks of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the United States and around the world, congregations and houses of worship need to be well-informed and well-prepared. This email includes our church's local response, prayers, and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton has issued a statement in response to concerns about the spread of COVID-19. Martin Luther, said the bishop, "emphasized the duty to care for the neighbor, the responsibility of government to protect and provide services to its citizens, a caution about recklessness, and the importance of science, medicine and common sense."

Our Immanuel Executive Council, Altar Guild, Pastor Molly and Allen have been consulting about the situation and following the recommendations of our MT Synod Bishop, the Missoula County Health Department, and the CDC.

At this time, we do plan to host worship on Sunday, March 15 with the following recommendations.

- Please stay home and contact your doctor if you have these symptoms -flu, fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- Please greet each other without a handshake during the Passing of the Peace and during other personal greetings. A hand placed on your heart with a smile and a reverent bow of acknowledgment is best.
- Please wash your hands upon entering and leaving the church building.
- Hand sanitizers and sanitizing stations will be available in the worship space.

- For holy communion, as always, we encourage preparers and servers to wash their hands before handling communion elements or serving. Both the bread and the wine are already served individually, so no changes in practice are necessary at this time.
- Frequent sanitation of door handles and other frequently touch surfaces will be conducted.
- Please remember that we do live stream our services from our website www.imluchurch.org and you may also give online.
- Especially in times of need we are reminded that Jesus Christ is God's living bread come down from heaven for the life of the world. During these times, particularly with a communal health concern, the Sunday assembly of Christians around word and sacrament is an important sign of resurrection hope in the midst of fear and trouble. We taste and see the Risen Christ's presence in the community gathered around word and meal. In this eucharistic assembly we pray for the needs of a suffering world, and from this eucharistic assembly we are sent to care for all our neighbors who are sick, hurt and hungry.

Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of the world your love is steadfast and your strength never fails. In this time of danger and trouble, be to us a sure guardian and rock of defense. Guide the leaders of our nation with your wisdom, comfort those in distress, and grant us courage and hope to face the future; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 76)

The chronically ill and those who support them

Loving God, your heart overflows with compassion for your whole creation. Pour out your Spirit on all people living with illness for which there is no cure, as well as their families and loved ones.

Help them to know that you claim them as your own and deliver them from fear and pain; for the sake of Jesus Christ, our healer and Lord. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 85)

Caregivers and others who support the sick

God, our refuge and strength, our present help in time of trouble, care for those who tend the needs of [the sick]/[name/s].

Strengthen them in body and spirit. Refresh them when weary; console them when anxious; comfort them in grief; and hearten them in discouragement. Be with us all, and give us peace at all times and in every way; through Christ our peace. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 85)

Health care providers

Merciful God, your healing power is everywhere about us.

Strengthen those who work among the sick; give them courage and confidence in all they do. Encourage them when their efforts seem futile or when death prevails. Increase their trust in your power even to overcome death and pain and crying. May they be thankful for every sign of health you give, and humble before the mystery of your healing grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 85)

*Copyright © 2020 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
This document may be reproduced for use in your congregation
as long as the copyright notice*

In Christ,

Pastor Molly Sasser-Goehner

**Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention**

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, the CDC always recommends these everyday preventive actions to arrest the spread of respiratory diseases:

- “ Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- “ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- “ Stay home when you are sick.
- “ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- “ Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- “ Follow CDC recommendations for using a face mask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19, to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of face masks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people caring for someone in a close setting](#) (at home or in a health care facility).
- “ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.