

[By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul writes:]

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!
Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.*

*Be anxious for nothing,
but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving
let your requests be made known to God.*

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:4-7 NASB

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

The last several months have been unlike anything that any of us have ever experienced before. Life as we had known it has been totally upended by the arrival of the novel coronavirus and the beginning of the worldwide pandemic of CoViD-19. Our life as sisters and brothers in Christ within His body, the Church, has not been immune to these changes. In mid-March our worship life and our school's educational life shifted to online only.

In mid-July, in light of growing knowledge about the coronavirus, we chose to return to in-person worship. Because this coronavirus cannot survive more than 48 to 72 hours outside a living cell, we chose to limit our worship services to one service per weekend, alternating between services on Saturday or Sunday. That way we knew that the worship area would be sterile as far as CoViD-19 was concerned. We have also observed other safety protocols. Everyone has been required to put on a mask and to sanitize their hands on entering the building. We have been only allowing seating in every third pew, with the Lord's Supper distributed in the pews, so that the recommended social distance of 6 feet can be maintained, and the like. With the resumption of school this fall, similar protocols have been observed within the school portions of the building.

We rejoice and give thanks to God for His blessings on our efforts to maintain a safe environment for both education and worship. Thus far, with God's gracious protection, we have not had any outbreaks of CoViD-19 within our facilities. **Because of these blessings, some adjustments in operations will be taking place in both the school and the church.** As to the outlining of the limited changes in the school's operations, I will leave that to Cory Emily, our principal, in his various communications with the Mt. Olive Lutheran School portion of our faith community. Changes on the church side I want to outline below.

We have been made aware that there are Mt. Olive Lutheran Church members who are very eager to return to the normalcy of our pre-March worship schedule. Therefore, based on a discussion and vote by Mt. Olive's elders on Monday, October 19, **we will be returning to our pre-March worship schedule NEXT weekend, Saturday, October 31, & Sunday, November 1,** as we celebrate Reformation Day. That weekend, and every weekend thereafter, will have **both a Saturday evening service at 5:00 pm and a Sunday morning service at 9:00 am.** The worship styles will be as they had been before. The Saturday service will be more formal and traditional. The Sunday service will be less formal with songs and music that will be band-led. **The schedule for the celebration of the Lord's Supper will also be returned to what we were observing before March.** When there is a 1st or 3rd Sunday of the month, the Supper will be celebrated in the Saturday evening service. On the 2nd or 4th Sunday of the month, the Supper will be celebrated in the Sunday morning service. If the weekend includes a 5th Sunday of the month, then the Supper will be celebrated in both the Saturday evening and Sunday morning services. For those of you who are continuing to "shelter in place" please call me on my cell phone at 515-721-4737 so that we can make arrangements for you to receive the Lord's Supper.

Given these schedule changes, what is happening with respect to the CoViD-19 safety protocols? With respect to services on Saturday evenings NOTHING changes. ALL of the safety protocols remain in place: The 72 hour exclusion of people from the worship area will be continued to be observed. Masks will be required. Hand sanitizing will be required. Social-distancing in the pews will be required. Communion distribution in the pews will be observed. **With respect to Sunday morning services the following changes will be made:** The 72 hour exclusion of people from the worship area will NOT be able to be observed. To compensate for any increased risk of virus transmission stemming from the loss of this self-cleaning period, the following will be done — after the Saturday evening service, all high-touch surfaces will be wiped down, in particular the tops of the pews surrounding the seating that was used on Saturday night. Also, seating on Sunday morning will be in different pews than those used for the service on Saturday evening. If you are an individual in a category with higher CoViD-19 risks due to age or underlying health conditions, we would encourage you to attend services on Saturday evening.

If you have any questions regarding these changes in Mt. Olive's worship schedule, please do not hesitate to call **me** on the **cell number shown above** or to call Head Elder **Greg Scheiwe** at 913-638-6766.

May God continue to bless you all! *Pastor Mark Kleckner*