

March 13, 2020

Dear Gloria Dei Community,

We are a community of faith, rooted in the hope and love of Jesus Christ. Knowing that God is a God of love and care for all people, I want to address the COVID-19 virus and Gloria Dei's response and precaution.

We are listening carefully to our city's response and recommendation of limiting gatherings of 250 or more; we are in contact with health officials from our local hospitals; and we are in constant prayer for our community, country and world. I have been in conversation with our congregational leaders, our Council President Jon Sogn, and our staff.

With that being said, and this is a very difficult decision, **Gloria Dei will be cancelling all worship services for this weekend, March 14-15, and next weekend, March 21-22. We will also be canceling Church related events, including Church School, Confirmation, Wednesday activities, Musical rehearsals, and other Church related events throughout this week.** This is a changing and fluid situation, so please watch for updates through the week. This will be extended if we feel it to be necessary.

I know that as of this writing we have had only eight cases reported across our state. I believe, however, that God calls us to be socially responsible and to care for not only our flock, but also the surrounding community. This is a response not of fear or panic, but of precaution and common sense. If this is indeed a wave, as health officials expect, then we want to do our part in keeping that wave as small as possible.

I am convinced that in times of challenge, we all need God. That's why this is a difficult decision to cancel worship services. In that light, we will be providing recorded and written devotionals and messages from the pastors throughout this time. Please stay alert to the Gloria Dei website and Facebook page. I encourage you to read Scripture and pray as individuals and as families.

A final word: Our presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has reminded us of Martin Luther's response to anxious Germans who, way back in 1527, were themselves facing the prospect of an epidemic. Luther wrote that above all else the Christian's duty is to care for one's neighbor. That included, according to Luther, taking care of the most vulnerable, following the best medical advice available, and avoiding unnecessary risks. We are doing our best to heed Luther's words and Christ's call to love our neighbors.

I ask for your prayers for our Church Council, our Pastors and Staff, and for all within this congregation, as together we move forward in hope. And please pray for health professionals, first responders, civic leaders and for the most vulnerable among us. We are a people of faith which casts out all fear. I pray that you will give your understanding and support to the difficult decisions we are needing to make. And most of all, I pray you will be filled with the hope and peace that comes from Christ.

Together in the love and mission of Jesus,

Pastor Selbo
Senior Pastor