



March 18, 2020

Dear Foothills Servants and Friends –

We write to inform you of a unanimous decision made by your congregation Council to halt all in-person worship gatherings, as well as all organizational and community meetings held in our church building until after **May 11** due to the public health threat of the Covid-19 virus. This is what has been requested of us by the Center for Disease

Control (CDC) and is in accordance with Bishop Deborah Hutterer's general recommendations for parishes in the Grand Canyon Synod. We felt that to do less at this time would not be appropriate for our church community or the broader community in which we live.

As you can imagine, such a difficult decision was not taken lightly. It was not made out of fear or paranoia, but rather on the basis of what it means to live as a follower of Christ. In this unprecedented time how can we best serve each other and our neighbors? Perhaps in foregoing our in-person worship and community life for a number of weeks, we will be protecting each other and those around us. As hard as it might be to understand, it seems that for now love looks like an empty church.

We know that now more than ever you will need your church and we want to be the church together. Even though we will not physically be in worship with one another, we are exploring ways to do this remotely in the hopes that we will sense and feel being part of the wonderful community here at Foothills as we listen to the word, and share in prayer. A number of churches are taking this step and until we are ready to post something like this on our website please explore the Grand Canyon Synod website (www.gcsynod.org) which will be listing churches that live-stream, or have audio or video services available on-line. Until we have that capability, our regular Friday email will include the weekly Footnotes and also the service document to use for your Sunday morning devotion.

Although there will be many changes that have an impact on our life together, some things will not change – the church office will be open for regular hours Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. During these hours our worship area will be open and available to you for personal prayer. Our monthly commitment to the homeless men at the Primavera Shelter remains the same for this month, as well as for April 17. You may also make an appointment with Pastor John at any time by calling the church office (520-299-5631) or emailing at pastor@foothillslutheran.org. Due to heightened restrictions in place at some medical facilities, hospital visits will be curtailed during this time, apart from critical pastoral needs.

We ask that you NOT come to the church building if you are ill. If you do come at other times please maintain appropriate distance from others, not touching them, not coughing or sneezing into your hands and other common precautions.

One of the implications of postponing Sunday morning worship is that our regular offering will not be received. We thank you for your past generosity which has placed us in a solid financial situation as we face the future. Our Council thought it essential to support our staff at their present levels of salary and keep current with our responsibilities, which includes not only staff support but also utilities and other standing expenses. We invite you to mail your offering to the church or give through your bank, or electronically as some of you do already. Realizing that our income could be impacted and that unexpected needs may arise, we welcome those with extra resources to consider making a special gift at this uncertain time.

Should you know of someone (perhaps yourself) who experiences an emergency financial need during these weeks ahead, please contact the church office. One way we are able to remain “community” is by our continued support and service to others.

Finally, in 2017 you generously provided me (Pastor John) a sabbatical leave – a time apart for three months. I invite each of us to consider our unusual circumstance, being physically separated but yet being a strong and supportive community of Christ, as something of an enforced sabbatical. Use this time for deeper prayer, meditation and study of Scripture. Give yourself permission to take long walks. Remind yourself about our place in the “grand scheme” of things. Keep a sense of humor! These unprecedented circumstances can spur us to spiritual renewal, liturgical creativity, and enhanced care for one another. It may be possible that when we are able to worship together again we will do so spiritually refreshed and strengthened in faith.

Here, in part, is a prayer of Julian of Norwich (1342-1413) that we offer for our community:

In you, Christ, we have our restoring and our saving. You are our mother, brother, and savior. In you is marvelous and plenteous grace. You are our clothing; for love you wrap us and embrace us. You are our maker, our lover, our keeper. Teach us to believe that by your grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Amen.

Pastor John and Laura Hollengreen, Congregation President