

To All St. Luke members and friends:

Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus!

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”! Peter 4:12-13

These are challenging times we are facing now. There is a real threat of becoming seriously sick or even dying of a virus we never heard of before.

But, in God’s Word, we are constantly warned and advised to use precaution and also not to despair. **“Fear Not!”** is a very common affirmation throughout Scriptures and reminds us that our LORD is always in control.

I want to take this opportunity to assure you and your family members that, as your Pastor, I’m available to serve and help you through this exceptional experience.

In this letter I want to share some of the general actions taken in our Ministry here at St. Luke, in order to serve our congregation, and include some links to access great resources online.

Pastoral Assistance:

As usual, I’m available to serve you 24/7. Should you face a hard time experiencing anxiety, if you are in need of prayer or just want someone to talk with, please give me a phone call or e-mail me. But, as expressed above, if you need me, call me anytime. If you don’t get through to me right away, leave me a message, preferably at my home (**604-575-6965**), and I’ll return the call as soon as possible.

Care Ministry:

I’m working to find some volunteers to call our members and friends to check how they are doing, or if they need any help. These volunteers will do regular phone calls and

report back to me, in case of major needs. If you feel comfortable with this task, please, give me a call. I’ll need 10 to 12 volunteers to do this task, on a regular basis.

Worship Services:

Our Services are cancelled for the time being and I don’t encourage you to come to church unless you have something very important to do here. We’ll continue to prepare the **Sunday bulletins**. This Sunday’s bulletin is already available at www.slhc.ca/sermons . There you also find some songs available on YouTube.

Phone me:

At home: **604-575-6965**

At church: **604-584-6446**

Email:

pastor@slhc.ca or

edgovaski@gmail.com

Office hours:

Tuesdays to Fridays

9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Sundays

9:00 am to 1:00 pm

If you’re hospitalized and need a visit: I’m expecting that some people might be hospitalized. In that case, I intend to see you if I get clearance from hospital personnel, and my own health would not cause you any harm. It’s very important that you or a family member contact me directly to inform about it. See the box for contact information.

Messages online:

I'm working to record my messages on video. It'll be ready by Saturday nights. Please, go to www.slhc.ca/sermon to access the recorded content. I will do it for this Sunday and the next, March 22 and 29, continuing with the *Restore the Roar* Series. After that, should we continue under the cancellation of activities, I may broadcast messages live, but it really depends on available equipment and know-how.

Holy Communion:

Should the cancellation of activities continue after March 31, I'll set a time and day when our members could come to church and receive Holy Communion. I intend to offer it twice per month, as our previous arrangements for the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. Due to the precautions that need to be in place, it will be necessary that each family or individual book a time in advance. You'll receive more information about it.

Devotional Life and Bible reading:

in order to grow strong in our faith, daily contact with God's Word is very important. If that is not a habit in your life, perhaps it's time to consider it now. Below, there are some links to daily devotions and Bible reading plans. Also, on our website there is a link to a Bible Study-related to the sermon series *Restore the Roar*, where you can dig deeper into the book of Amos.

Here are some important links that you may want to check:

A Letter from the President of Lutheran Church Canada about the pandemic: <https://www.canadianlutheran.ca/concerning-covid-19-statement-from-lcc-president/>

Devotional suggestions:

<https://www.lutheranchurchcanada.ca/covid-19/>

<https://www.lhm.org/dailydevotions/default.asp?date=20200320>

Bible reading plan:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/>

Online Services from other churches:

Lutheran Church-Canada will make available a list of congregations broadcasting their Services and/or sermons. Please, check the LCC website during the weekend.

<https://www.lutheranchurchcanada.ca/>

Although there are many websites with churches broadcasting everything, I recommend that you check and feed your faith with those aligned with our doctrines and teachings.

Here's the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod website with other

resources: <https://www.lcms.org/>

My routine as yours, I presume, has been awkwardly altered in the last week. I have been reading, researching and planning the things I shared with you, while answering some of the concerns that are coming up. I expect that my routine will continue to be awkward for a while until we return to normal, or even to a new normal.

I have received all kinds of input and messages, in general good and well-intended suggestions. It's important that each one practise some good spiritual virtues, like being kind, patient and compassionate. It's time to come together as one, as the body of Christ. So Pastor, leadership, and members all need to work together. It's an incredible time to share our faith – look how scared people are out there. It's time to share the love with those in need, especially those in our congregation and under serious risk of getting this disease.

As other spiritual needs may appear, I'll do my best to respond to them, or delegate it to those who can respond to it. I also need your prayers and your comprehension if things don't work perfectly. This is a time that God gives us the opportunity to put our faith in practice. And also, the devil wants to take this opportunity to tear us apart. So, pray for me, for the leadership, and for each member that we all remain strong in one faith and committed to serving the Lord and each other.

One last word: keep in mind that we'll return to normal at some point. When that happens, that will be the time to return to church and worship with your brothers and sisters. You may get used to sleep in on Sunday mornings. That's OK for now. But, once we resume, then your presence here is quite important. God doesn't need your worship or your presence, but we, the church, need each one here in order to be reassured that we are one in Christ. Your presence encourages me, encourages other people. Your absence has the opposite effect.

The LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

In Christ Jesus,
Pastor Ed