



Office of the President
The Reverend Doctor Matthew C. Harrison
President of the Synod

March 27, 2020

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. As we all face this new and challenging reality, I'm reminded of this past summer. We met in convention under the theme "Joy:fully Lutheran." We read and studied 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18. And though our situation is very different, these words from St. Paul are still very true. "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

I'm sure many of you have prayed more lately than usual. But what about the rest? Rejoice always? Even now? Give thanks in all circumstances? Even this one? Well, yes. As St. Paul reminds us, this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus.

We rejoice that Jesus has conquered death for His saints. Former first vice-president and my dear colleague and friend Herb Mueller died this past week from brain cancer. We buried him yesterday in a small service. We do not mourn as those who have no hope, but with Herb's wife, Faith, and his family, we rejoice in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection, even if we do so through tears. As Herb reminded us during the convention, "The God of the universe puts His name on you, claims you for His own, unites you with His Son in His death and resurrection." To that, we say "Amen, Herb." Rejoice and give thanks. God's promises are sure and certain, also for you.

And there is much more cause to rejoice and give thanks!

I thank God, for all of our congregations and their lay leaders who are forging ahead, making faithful decisions appropriate for their circumstances, and daring to find ways to continue and to serve others even now.

I'm very thankful for our 35 district presidents, and the Synod vice-presidents who continue to counsel each other, communicate and offer support to each other.

I'm thankful for the circuit visitors, and circuits who are consulting each other.

I'm thankful for and rejoice over the patience you are showing to others in the church.

I'm thankful for and rejoice over thousands of LCMS teachers who have shifted to online classrooms.

I'm thankful for our many LCMS agencies caring for families, children, the disabled, and elderly, many in difficult situations.

I rejoice over our seminaries and universities, and the thousands of professors, and tens of thousands of students, who have moved to online learning.

Over, please.

I rejoice over our stellar overseas missionaries and their families, who are taking their unique challenges in stride, with faithfulness.

I am thankful for the wise scriptural counsel of the Commission on Theology regarding the Lord's Supper.

I'm thankful for CPH taking special action to provide worship resources, cost free; for the LCMS Foundation, for the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, for Concordia Plan Services, and the Lutheran Federal Credit Union, which are all taking very helpful action to serve in these unique times.

Concordia Plans is carefully tracking for us the ramifications of the legislation currently pending in the U.S. House regarding also non-profits. The LCRL is keeping us up to speed and communicating with key legislators. With the LCEF, we will soon unveil an effort for support of our most vulnerable workers.

I thank God for our staff here in St. Louis too. They have magnificently handled this great challenge.

I rejoice and give thanks for all the great folks of the LCMS going about their vocations, especially all the medical personnel (my own daughter-in-law is now working in the COVID virus unit at her hospital), first responders, police and public officials, politicians, including our LCMS congressmen and senators. Lord have mercy on them all.

Join me especially in praying, rejoicing and giving thanks for our dear pastors and people in New York City, California and Washington State, and other places particularly hard hit.

Keep loving your pastors (as I know you are) and teachers and staff. Be generous! This is temporary!

And I rejoice over our blessed Good Friday and Easter Savior. May we be together soon, in person, and in person with Him, to celebrate the Easter of all Easters.

O Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this world is Yours; deliver us, our nation and all others from this scourge. Cause us to repent and seek Your mercy. Let Your Gospel be heard and believed everywhere. Be with the sick and the dying; and grant us courage and love to serve You in our neighbors. We plead for Your sake, O Holy Trinity, end this scourge. Amen.

And as Paul says, “πάντοτε χαίρετε; Always rejoice. ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε; Pray without ceasing. ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε; Give thanks in everything.” This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Amen.

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison

President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

P.S. To find resources to navigate the COVID-19 outbreak, including daily video devotions and materials for congregations, schools, families and individuals, visit lcms.org/coronavirus.