



March 19, 2020

Dear Beloved in Christ,

God is faithful and ever-present, in our hearts and minds and daily journey of life. We are God's people of the Resurrection, called to lives grounded in God's grace, mercy and love, which has been revealed and shared with us through Jesus Christ. Jesus promises us today, and always that he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We don't have the answers to this unprecedented crisis of health and economy. It seems everything has changed more rapidly than we could have imagined.

And yet nothing has changed about God's faithful presence in our lives. God does not promise to make believers immune from disease or harm. Rather, through Jesus Christ God comes to walk with us through whatever may come. We are all trying to cope as best we can with the urgent public health crisis caused by the corona virus, COVID-19. Your Church Council and your Staff have been in much prayer and conversations about how we can most effectively and faithfully be church together during this crisis.

Truth requires that we don't sugar-coat or minimize the seriousness of the situation, but rather calls us to make decisions which use the best available information to Reflect the Light of Christ in Crystal. We do this by loving and serving one another through ministry which minimizes the spread of COVID-19 and which continues to extend Christ's grace, mercy and love to all. As soon as possible, we will resume worship services at St James and the many wonderful ministries we so much enjoy by gathering together. And yes, we will get through this together. We will do so by following practices which express our love and care for our neighbor. Practices which slow the spread of the virus which are recommended by the CDC and other public health authorities. Together, in this time of great trial, we will maintain and deepen our relationships in Christ.

As you know, our Council and I made the very difficult decision to suspend worship services at our St James worship center, beginning last Sunday. However, our worship leaders have initiated an on-line worship ministry which offers worship and meditations every day of the week through our St James Facebook page and on YouTube. Please make use of these opportunities! However, some of our members do not use the internet and we are therefore going to be asking you to participate in a congregation-wide phone tree. You will be receiving further information about who you are invited to call as a part of the phone tree. Everyone is encouraged to send at least one letter or card every week to a congregation member. If you need an electronic directory of congregation member names and addresses, please send a request by email to aburns@stjamesincrystal.org or call the church office at 763-537-3653.

If you need help of any kind, please email Amanda, or Pastor Randy at romsdahl@stjamesincrystal.org. His cell phone number is 612-803-2879. Such needs may be for prayers, food, rides, information or anything which your church can provide. As a good health stewardship practice, please use your best information sources to keep informed about the latest advice about best practices for avoiding the COVID-19 virus. However, none of us are best served by obsessing about the situation or watching such news coverage constantly.

Another important stewardship practice calls us to continue our generous financial support of our church. The church's costs and expenses do not change significantly when the facility is closed to activities. Yes, our water bill goes down, but our communications costs are going up because we are communicating more by first class mail.

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Heating costs change little, and the mortgage and staff costs remain constant. You can contribute to St. James Lutheran by going to our website and setting up electronic giving (by debit card, credit card or electronic giving from your checking account) through Push Pay. Diana and I use automatic electronic giving from our checking account using Push Pay and are very happy with how easy it is to use. We can also mail our contributions by check to St James Lutheran Church, 6700 46th Place North, Crystal, MN 55428.

Our congregation's generosity continues unabated. On Monday night, our Church Council voted to establish a matching fund inviting our congregation to make contributions to St James designated to the NEAR Food Shelf. All donations will be matched up to \$2,000 in total gifts. Therefore, if our congregation members contribute \$2,000, the matching fund will make it a \$4,000 contribution to NEAR. Any contribution designated to NEAR during the next two months will qualify for the matching funds. The need for food help in our community has increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and through our generosity, we Reflect the Light of Christ in Crystal.

Thank you for your generosity, kindness, compassion, grace and love for your neighbors.

Love in Christ,
Pastor Randy