



Northeastern Ohio Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 12, 2020

Dear siblings in Christ of the Northeastern Ohio Synod,

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to escalate, we are mindful of your concerns, especially when it comes to worship and other religious gatherings. We will continue to provide as much helpful information as we can, hopefully without adding to the alarm.

On Thursday, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Department of Health director Dr. Amy Acton signed an order banning gatherings of more than 100 people. However, that order does NOT apply to religious gatherings, weddings, or funerals.

Unlike some of our sibling denominations and church bodies, decisions in the ELCA about modifying congregational activities are made by pastors and congregational leaders, not by synod or Churchwide offices. We, therefore, offer our best advice and support your decisions and ask you to use your discretion and make the decision that is most reassuring to your congregation.

Several of you have asked whether you can live stream your services. Our Resource Specialist, Ms. Karen Kaufman, offers these suggestions:

Can We Live-Stream our Worship Service?

You may have noticed that your pastor or another pastor live-streams their sermon. Since they are the owners of the material they are free to do this. They also know or should be aware that to live-stream music or other materials requires permission by the copyright owners unless otherwise granted permission.

In conversation with Michael Moore of copyright permissions of 1517 Media on Thursday, March 12 he stated the following “**For this weekend (March 14-15, 2020)** congregations are free to live-stream any materials that have an Augsburg Fortress copyright, this includes hymns and liturgy **that are owned by Augsburg Fortress**. [Check the small print at the bottom of the hymn page to verify who owns the copyright.] Soon a communication from Augsburg Fortress will announce what procedures need to be followed in order to continue live-streaming specific portions of your worship service via Facebook Live, YouTube, etc. in coming weeks.

For music covered under OneLicense (which covers a large number of the copyright holders of hymns in the ELW and LBW) you can easily add the “live-stream” option to your license by visiting <https://www.onelicense.net/options-and-prices>. [They will pro-rate the live-stream option to your current license.]

For music covered under CCLI use this link <https://us.ccli.com/streaming-license-terms-of-agreement/>

You will also need to pay attention to the copyright owner of choir anthems or other special music that may be a part of your worship service. If the music is in the public domain or covered by the proper licensing agreement then they can be included. None of the above licenses allow you to include videos you may be showing in worship unless under another special license. I think now you understand why you see primarily sermons on Facebook Live as opposed to a whole worship service. (If you are wondering about services that are on the radio; part of paying for the radio broadcast covers the necessary licensing for radio transmission of music.)

By paying the licensing fees and gaining permissions we are following the Seventh Commandment and modeling for others the protection of another's property.

In my [previous letter](#), I attached several helpful links to the Ohio Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Controls in order to remain accurately informed on best practices. We ask that you continue to monitor those sites to remain accurately informed on the best practices to combat the spread of the illness and diminish the anxiety.

Two immediate concerns center around Holy Communion and the sharing of the peace. Let me quickly offer these few bits of practical wisdom.

- People (including pastors) who are ill with the virus or the flu should be encouraged to stay home from public worship.
- Servers of the meal should wash their hands thoroughly before distributing the elements.
- Contrary to popular opinion, the common cup does not contribute to the spread of disease. However, if you don't feel comfortable, there are alternatives; such as the pouring chalice into an individual cup or not taking the wine at all. (Christ is present in both elements.)
- Sharing the peace can be done by simply acknowledging each other with a bow, a wave, or a verbal greeting.

I am asking our communications team to add these resources to our website so that you may have all the information in one location as you consider what actions to take regarding worship.

May God's abiding presiding comfort and sustain you in these coming days. May this Lenten season be a time of reflection, particularly about what it means to be the body of Christ and caring for ourselves, as well as the neighbor in need.

Peace,



+Bishop Abraham D. Allende