



Northeastern Ohio Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*
[Psalm 46:1-3]

Dear People of God and siblings in Christ of the Northeastern Ohio Synod,

The recent outbreak of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has generated a variety of responses ranging from casual worry to outright panic.

We in the Northeastern Ohio Synod office are aware of your concerns and assure you that it is wise and appropriate to be concerned about the spreading of the coronavirus and to take reasonable precautions as we gather at our churches for worship and meetings. We are not medical doctors, therefore we encourage you to read the updates regularly provided on the websites of the [Ohio Department of Health](https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/home) (https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/home) or the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html), in order to remain accurately informed on the best practices and recommendations to combat the spread of the illness and diffuse the anxiety level.

As people of faith, the most frequently asked questions center around worship and whether we should attend services, share the peace, or take Holy Communion.

Here are links that you may find helpful in regards to these practices:

[ELCA Worship Resources: Worship in Times of Public Health Concerns](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Worship_in_Times_of_Public_Health_Concerns.pdf?_ga=2.121589256.1620723324.1583358300-856383824.1580921823): (https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Worship_in_Times_of_Public_Health_Concerns.pdf?_ga=2.121589256.1620723324.1583358300-856383824.1580921823)

[Congregational Planning Checklist for a Pandemic](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/PandemicChecklist.pdf?_ga=2.79981207.1620723324.1583358300-856383824.1580921823): (https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/PandemicChecklist.pdf?_ga=2.79981207.1620723324.1583358300-856383824.1580921823)

[ODH Coronavirus Disease 2019: Community and Faith Based Organizations](https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/be8477a5-8850-4e56-9c09-21c901af6252/COVID-19+CFBOs+03-02-20.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_M1HGGIK0N0JO00Q09DDDDM3000-be8477a5-8850-4e56-9c09-21c901af6252-n2Cy76R): (https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/wcm/connect/gov/be8477a5-8850-4e56-9c09-21c901af6252/COVID-19+CFBOs+03-02-20.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_M1HGGIK0N0JO00Q09DDDDM3000-be8477a5-8850-4e56-9c09-21c901af6252-n2Cy76R)

The comforting message of the psalmist, as stated in Psalm 46 above, combined with the practical information of the links provided, will hopefully calm our fears and ease our anxieties during this time of public concern.

We close with the following prayer from our Evangelical Lutheran Worship:

Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of the world your love is steadfast and your strength never fails. In this time of danger and trouble, be to us a sure guardian and rock of defense. Guide us with your wisdom, comfort those in distress, and grant us courage and hope to face the future; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

+Bishop Abraham Allende