



St. Paul Lutheran Church and Preschool

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Brothers and sisters of St. Paul Lutheran,

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Christian congregation in Corinth: “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, *hardships*, persecutions, and *calamities*. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:10) Have you been “content” with the hardships and calamities that you have had to endure these last 6 months? I hear you saying, “obviously, no!” We may not be content with our situation, but let me assure you that the Lord is still on His throne, Jesus Christ is still the way, the truth and the life, the Holy Spirit still fills you up with faith, hope and love through the WORD! God is still in control!

I have seen the evidence of His control and presence in the people and the ministry here at St. Paul. What a joy it was back on August 3rd when we had our gym filled with people (social distanced), celebrating God’s grace and mercy, thanking Him for Kim Detmer’s faithful service and honoring Kim with a little roast and gifts. What a joy it was on August 23rd and September 6th when we had worship on the south lawn and many faces that we hadn’t seen for months attended and a few visitors from the community joined us. And what an amazing day last Sunday! Without the masks and social distances, you would have thought it was a “normal” Sunday with many people in the pews, fellowship time, Christian Education for all ages, and Youth Group later that evening! Praise and thanks to the Lord for His presence and Word!

This leads me to address something that is out of my control and differs with each Christian conscience..... how individual members of St. Paul are responding to the continual dangers of Covid-19. I have witnessed these polar responses: Response 1: “Remove restrictions, get back to normal, I am not afraid, God determines when my life here is completed, I won’t wear a mask;” Response 2: “Wear that mask, social distance, I am a bit frightened and very worried, I’m not coming to church if people are not wearing masks and social distancing.” It was obvious from last Sunday’s attendance that there many who agree with Response 1. Many also hold to response 2, with many more somewhere in between.

With these realities in mind our Board of Elders meet last Sunday and after much discussion and prayerful deliberation we are making the following changes to Sunday morning and adding a worship opportunity:

SUNDAY MORNINGS- RSVP requirements for Sunday morning will no longer be needed. No masks will be required entering and exiting (although you are free to wear your mask, no mask judging at St. Paul!). There will be no seating restrictions, while still encouraging the use of all the pews. We will continue keeping many precautions- no offering plate, no hand shaking, and no fellowship pads or hymnals. Hand sanitizer on the way up to communion will be offered (a station will be at the chancel steps). Communion distribution will return to our normal routine (full table with kneeling). The elder on duty will be wiping off the altar rail after each table.

MASK AND SOCIAL DISTANCE SERVICE- on Wednesday Sept. 23rd at 7pm (also on Oct. 7th and 21st). Masks *must* be worn entering, exiting and throughout the service. Social distancing *will be* required, every other pew will be used. Communion distribution will happen pew by pew, with no kneeling. The service will be identical to the prior Sunday. We will require an RSVP on our website for these services so that we can remain in social distancing.

I want to stress that if you are feeling ill, running a fever or displaying any Covid symptoms, please stay home. We will be continuing the live stream of our 11am Sunday service and offering online Bible study and devotional videos. Your *personal discernment* is absolutely paramount.... you decide when you are ready to attend the Mask and Social Distance services, resume attending worship on Sunday morning, and attending other activities here at St. Paul.

If you have any questions, concerns, unmet needs, prayer requests, etc. please don't hesitate to contact me via text, email, cellphone or letter.

Navigating these last 6 months has been difficult and painful at times. Your continual prayers and support for myself, Pastor Miller, the staff of St. Paul, our Elders and MGB members and all our willing volunteers have been powerful and appreciated. The continual financial support of St. Paul has been stellar. My pray is that as we separate a bit now, in order to meet the needs of all, we can remain united and zealous for the mission and ministry of our congregation.

Please pray..... Lord, you know the deep places through which our lives must go: Help us, when we enter them, to lift our hearts to you; help us to be patient when we are afflicted, to be humble when we are in distress; and grant that the hope of your mercy may never fail us, and the consciousness of your lovingkindness may never be clouded or hidden from our eyes; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen!

Incessant peace and joy in Jesus,



Pastor Timothy Brand