

May 9, 2020

Friends in Christ---

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor. 13:14)

Here we are, 50-ish days into social distancing. Worship services were suspended through March 30th. Now, suspension has been extended until June 28th. This decision comes after considering a recommendation from our "Reopening JOY's Task Force." An excerpt from the Task Force letter to Church Council reads,

"It is the recommendation of the Reopening JOY Task Force that the opening of the Church be moved forward to June 28th, pending the formulation of a plan developed by the Reopening Task Force subject to approval of the Church Council.

As we serve a congregation with members in the most vulnerable demographic group, it is incumbent on us to make develop a plan ensuring the safety of all our members and the organization to the best of our abilities. This is one of those few instances, where we may not have the opportunity to make corrections and adjustments down the road after a plan has been developed and implemented as any major errors may have severe health and safety consequences."

To this end, please allow me to remind us:

- There will be no public worship at JOY until June 28th Sunday Service, earlier if conditions change. (Hopefully, conditions will soon change)
- All events, committee meetings, etc., and activities are also suspended. Until public worship and church activities resume, avail yourselves of the following:
  - The Sunday sermon and readings will be made available via our website. The JOY website (<https://www.joylutheranelca.com>) has great value to our congregation and this is a time when it can serve us very well. A youtube channel has been established to provided abbreviated worship services and other information.
  - Committees with an urgent need to meet during this suspension, are invited to call me to schedule either a Google Hangout, Skype, or Zoom videoconference.
  - The Stephen Ministry leader, Elaine Heine, has divided the congregation into manageable call lists. Calls are being made to offer a listening ear, to support connection, and to nurture the sense of belonging that is so central to who we are as JOY Lutheran Church. We need one another. We are all in this together.
  - Until decided otherwise, Brenda Goodson, Pastor's secretary, will work from home. She is currently assisting pastor with returning calls, managing correspondence, and with identifying member needs. Pastor Bryant is dropping by the office once per day to sort mail, return urgent messages, etc. Email ([joylutheranpb@gmail.com](mailto:joylutheranpb@gmail.com)) is an effective means to reach out to Brenda. To email Pr. Bryant directly, use [prjdbryant4tide@gmail.com](mailto:prjdbryant4tide@gmail.com). If you have a need that is truly urgent, call Pr. Bryant directly #321.312.7339.
- If you have not already done so, sign up to receive Tidings of JOY, our newsletter, via email. This will help keep us connected.

- Please mail your offerings and contributions directly to the church: JOY Lutheran Church, 3174 Jupiter Blvd SE, Palm Bay, FL 32909. Our expenses do not suspend, even if our time together is temporarily suspended. Your generosity is appreciated.

Even as, with Psalm 13:1a, we cry, “How long, O Lord,” we remember that we are the children of God; we belong to God. This doesn’t change even though we are physically apart. We are never off of God’s radar, to turn a phrase.

Psalm 139: 7-12 says, “Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol (the dwelling place of the dead) you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,’ even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

God bless and keep you,

JDB+

Pr. J. David Bryant+