



Dear Christians at St. John's Burt,

As we were preparing to send you a letter regarding our safety measures for avoiding the COVID-19, Governor Reynolds issued a public health disaster emergency for the state of Iowa. Here are the details of her declaration which apply to us at St. John's:

SECTION THREE. Pursuant to Iowa Code § 135.144 (3), and in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Public Health, unless otherwise modified by subsequent proclamation or order of the Iowa Department of Public Health, I hereby order that effective Noon today, March 17, 2020, and continuing until 11:59 p.m. on March 31, 2020: [...]

E. Mass Gathering: Social, community, spiritual, religious, recreational, leisure, and sporting gatherings and events of more than 10 people are hereby prohibited at all locations and venues, including but not limited to parades, festivals, conventions, and fundraisers. Planned large gatherings and events must be canceled or postponed until after termination of this disaster.

Therefore in obedience to our governing authorities, for the good of the health of our congregation, and with the understanding that this is a short-term prohibition, **we are cancelling all services and activities at St. John's Lutheran Church through April 1.** This means that if the prohibition is in fact lifted after April 1, then our first service back at St. John's is planned for Sunday, April 5th.

While our assembling as a congregation to receive the Word and Sacrament of Christ is what defines us as His Church, this does not mean that we will cease to be Christians in these next few weeks while we are not meeting together; neither does it mean that the opportunity to receive God's grace and forgiveness will be absent in these next few weeks.

With this in mind, I would like for you to consider these suggestions for feeding your Christian faith and living your Christian life until we (God-willing) come together again on April 5th.

1. I am eager to pray with you, read Scripture with you, absolve your sins, and share the Lord's Supper with you upon request during these next three weeks. Feel free to call me any day at any time at 319-464-5548. We can meet at your home or at church to receive God's Word and Sacrament. You can even arrange to receive the Divine Service together with several others at once, provided we keep our gathering under 10 as the Governor instructed.
2. Now is a great time to get connected with our various channels of communication at St. John's. I encourage you to sign up for Flocknote, follow our Facebook page, and visit our website (stjohnsburt.org) to stay informed and receive resources for feeding your faith at home. Note that if you do not have internet access all necessary communication from St. John's will come to you by phone call or mail.



3. Sunday and Wednesday worship services will be live-streamed and recorded by the partnership pastors these next few weeks. You can view these videos at Trinity, Algona's Youtube channel. Just search "Trinity Lutheran Church - Algona" in Youtube and their channel will be the first search result.
4. You are welcome to stop by St. John's any time and pick up some of our many Scripture and prayer resources in the back of church. I will be setting up an extra table of resources in back for you to use during our time off as well. If you don't have a hymnal at home, feel free to borrow one from church for the next three weeks. Don't forget about our church library as well! If you come when no one is here, just call me at 319-464-5548 for the door code.
5. We will continue to send out the announcements these next two weeks to keep you informed. We will have paper copies at the guest stand if you want to stop by and get a paper copy.
6. At this time more than ever your neighbor needs your love and mercy. If you don't have one already, pick up an annual report in back of church and pray for every one of our members listed during this time, along with our world in general. Pick up the phone and call each other, especially our elderly members and see how they are doing and if they need any help in any way. In addition to your continued offerings to church, try to save to help those who are currently or will be financially affected by this quarantine.
7. Above all else have faith that nothing happens outside of the will and power of God. Perhaps God has allowed this pestilence in our land to draw us to greater repentance for our sins. Perhaps God is trying to further ground our faith in Him as the Provider for our body and soul. Perhaps God is giving His Church a greater opportunity to share the love of Christ to a world in need. Whatever the reason may be, and likely it is a combination of all these reasons, we know that God is in control, that He will never leave us nor forsake us, and that even in the face of earthly death we have the joy of eternal life waiting for us at the Resurrection of the dead.

May the Lord bless and keep you, and in these uncertain times may you have every certainty that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Thomas Cowell
Jeff Schutjer
Jerry Koestler
Boyd Shipler
Tony Hatten