

# ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

709 North Sixth Street • Wausau, Wisconsin 54403 • (715) 848-7286

website: [zionlutheranwausau.com](http://zionlutheranwausau.com) e-mail: [zion@zionlutheranwausau.com](mailto:zion@zionlutheranwausau.com)

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March 24, 2020 A.D. ~ Eve of the Annunciation

Beloved Saints,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24). Those words opened Zion’s live radio broadcast this past Sunday, reminding us that every day belongs to the Lord of heaven and earth, who makes all things new. No matter what changes, He and His care make every day a day to rejoice.

So as I prepare this second pastoral letter to reflect on our changed way of life under COVID-19 restrictions, two Bible verses come to mind:

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you.” (1 Peter 5:6)

It has pleased God our Father to bring us to this time and place. What good it will bring, we do not yet know, but we know that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him” (Romans 8:28). So, having been made children of God with Jesus Christ, and kept with Him in His love and power, we humble ourselves before God’s wisdom, and we rejoice and give thanks to Him in every circumstance.

By the time you receive this letter, you will know that our governor has placed the state of Wisconsin under an even more severe restriction, a “safer at home” order, to slow the spread of the coronavirus. It will alter some of what we have planned at Zion. As Christians, we accept these changes for the time being, not out of compulsion or servile obedience to the state, but in the freedom of ruling with Christ and for the sake of loving our neighbors. Here are some things that you may expect:

- 1) **Zion will continue broadcasting at 9 AM on Sundays through WSAU 550 AM, 99.9 FM, and 95.1 FM ([www.wsau.com](http://www.wsau.com), click “listen now”).** I have confirmed this fact with our representative at WSAU. We will also continue our live-streaming offerings on Facebook, sometimes from our homes.
- 2) If the restrictions are still in place through April 12, **Zion will observe Holy Week and Easter at its regular time, April 5-April 12, through radio broadcasts and live-streaming options.** Further information will be forthcoming, but we are already confirming our radio times with our media partners. Why not delay it, as we considered? It will be good for our souls to remain on the Church’s time through this season of illness, to remind us that God is our Lord, and not a virus. **However**, we will look forward to another festive, “welcome-back-home,” Easter-joy celebration of the Lord’s resurrection when our society is well, the restrictions are lifted, and we may gather again. Every Sunday is a celebration of Easter!

- 3) **Zion's office will be closed to the public starting Wednesday, March 25.** A small crew of pastors and staff will take turns receiving mail, checking messages, and answering phones when available; but we will not be open for visitors.
- 4) **You may still call us!** You may still contact the church via phone and email. If you must leave a message, someone will check it and call you back. For a pastoral emergency, you may call these emergency numbers: 715-776-0201 (Pinzl), 651-783-2401 (Johnson), 715-845-1551 (Gjerde).
- 5) **Pastors will most likely not be able to visit homes apart from emergencies.** While the details are not fully released yet, governments in states under similar orders are not allowing pastors to go from home to home. If the same here, we will not be able to bring you Holy Communion in your home at this time.
- 6) **A Care Team is assembled to help members who cannot leave their homes.** If you need help getting groceries and the like, call the church office to leave a message or send an email. Members of Zion have volunteered to help! And we give thanks for this expression of love and care in our congregation.
- 7) **Our email tree grows; please submit your email, if you wish.** My first letter had a misspelling in the email you were to use for this task. The correct email is: [zion@zionlutheranwausau.com](mailto:zion@zionlutheranwausau.com) (the final "a" was dropped in the first mailing). If you submit your email to this email, we will include you on the email tree.
- 8) **If you listen to us via radio on Sundays, consider snapping a "selfie" of your household and you doing so, post it on Facebook (or share it with Zion's Facebook page!), and let others know about us.** Now is a good time to invite others to hear the Word of God through Zion.

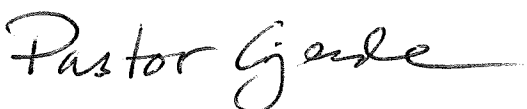
The mission of Jesus Christ continues, even in dire times. Through plague, war, famine, and persecution, the Church of Christ has always stuck to its calling: **"to proclaim the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).** Zion and Bethany both took a step forward in this mission last week, in which we commemorated St. Patrick the missionary by voting to join Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ. It was a confession of faith and hope over against all worry and fear.

**Also, please know that your offerings to the congregation remain invaluable at this time.** We have a dedicated staff ready to hang in there through the restrictions, and we want to support them and our house of worship throughout this ordeal. Therefore, there are instructions attached to this mailing on how to share your offerings with Zion even though we cannot gather around the altar together.

Finally, while I prefer not to emphasize personal matters in the course of my ministry, I must inform you, so that you know where I am for a few days, that my mother died on March 20. She was a faithful Christian woman who prayed much, and she now rests in the light of Christ. So from Wednesday, March 25, through Friday, March 27, I will be attending to her burial in Illinois. I am praying that these restrictions don't conflict with her burial significantly, but even more, I am giving thanks for her future resurrection and joy in Jesus.

You still should be receiving a pastoral letter next week, too—our office manager, Pam Gabriel, wisely prepared envelopes and supplies ahead of time! But, as we move forward, if something expected does not occur, please know that it is likely due to forces beyond our control, and we are working hard to stay in touch and to continue serving this Gospel that we all love so much. Even more, God loves you!

With my brothers, Pr. Johnson and Pr. Pinzl, and all the servants at Zion, I bid you God's peace in Christ.



The Rev. Dr. Steven K. Gjerde  
Senior Pastor