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Dear Community of Our Redeemer's,

Two weeks after I arrived at Our Redeemer's, and five minutes before Ash Wednesday worship was to begin, the earth started shaking. And kept shaking. It was what we now call the Nisqually Earthquake. When worship began, the very first words came from Psalm 26:

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble.
Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea....
The LORD is with us....and says, "Be still, and know that I am God."*

SO relevant! We all chuckled as we read it, even though our legs still felt shaky.

Dear friends, these verses are just as true today. We need not fear, because no matter how upside-down things may feel right now, God holds us fast with love that constantly quenches our fear, and a Spirit not of timidity, but of courage.

Our Redeemer's staff and leadership continue to update our response. On Thursday afternoon, our bishop, Shelley Wee, forwarded a legal order for King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties that includes a checklist with such a high threshold that, as she put it "*I do not believe any of our congregations can meet it.*" The order says:

"Based on public safety needs and the effort to protect our health care system from collapse, we ask all organizations, including faith-based ones, to please comply with these actions, which are the most available and effective tools to slow the spread of the virus... This is our best chance to save lives. It supports the most vulnerable in our community and protects everyone. The more united we can be in preventing the spread, the greater the benefit for the whole community, and the sooner we can end the restrictive measures."

As a result, Our Redeemer's will be doing the following:

WORSHIP:

Streaming one Sunday service weekly at 11AM at <http://www.facebook.com/ourredeemers>.

- See <https://ourredeemers.net/virtual-worship/> for details on how to get the bulletin, set up communion at home, and participate.
- We are doing our very best to find a way for people without computer or cell phone access to participate. Please stay tuned.
- In-person worship will likely be suspended through April 24, as that mirrors Seattle School closures. However, we are praying restrictions will be lifted by Holy Week (April 5-12).

CONNECTION & COMMUNITY:

In-person groups, meetings, and classes are suspended through April 24, 2020.

- We encourage groups to meet on-line. Our relationships and faith are an essential source of strength and reassurance to one another. Contact your group leader directly to find out if your meeting is happening on-line.
- If your group is hands-on, is there a different, safer way to accomplish your tasks? (Example: Ballard Sunday Dinner sack suppers, rather than a sit-down meal.)
- The only exception to this is Centering Prayer, which has no interpersonal interaction, and allows people to sit at a great distance from one another.
- Staff will be focusing on pastoral care calls, and providing inspiration and encouragement on-line. We are developing ways to support your faith life in your family and your home.

SERVICE:

For those who are healthy and in non-vulnerable populations, we will be developing new ways to serve, possibly beyond the congregation.

In 1527, Martin Luther addressed anxious Germans who were themselves facing the prospect of an epidemic. His counsel to his parishioners is still applicable. Above all else, he wrote, the Christian's duty is to care for one's neighbor. Taking care of the neighbor, according to Luther, includes caring for the most vulnerable, following the best medical advice available, and avoiding unnecessary risks. As we face our own challenges five centuries later, we may take heart in his confidence that God is living and active, working always for the good of God's people, and equipping us to care for and love one another as Christ has loved us. We are, ultimately, a people of hope...and we will weather these challenges with equal measures of courage and compassion.*

As the crisis deepens, our normal way of being the church is being disrupted. That's unsettling. But at the heart of what feels chaotic, God is calling us to be God's presence with anxious people, and those facing unique challenges caused by the virus.

Please join me in praying that, as unsettling as this time is, God will use it to deepen our bond to each other in Christ, and our trust in how utterly faithful God is to us, no matter what.

You are beloved of God.

And we are called to be God's people,
as perhaps we have never been before or will be again.

Thank you! And peace be with you,



Pastor Kathy Hawks

*Quoted by Pastor David Lose of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minnesota