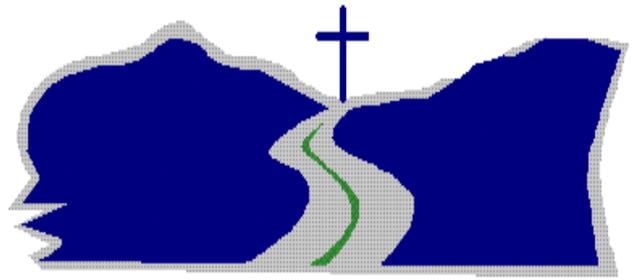


# *Forward in Faith*

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March 18, 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you in the name of Lenten Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus says, in the Gospel of St. John the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.” These words of our Savior give to us great comfort and peace especially in such tumultuous times as these.

Last night the Elders and I met and had some very serious discussions relating to the ministry of St. Paul Lutheran Church, and some very difficult decisions were made. As Christians we know the importance of, “Remembering the Sabbath Day and keeping it Holy” in that we gladly hear God’s Word through the preaching of the Gospel and the receiving of His gifts in His Sacraments. We also know the importance of not hurting or harming our neighbor in their body, but helping them in every physical need, as well as the importance of honoring and obeying those in authority, including those in civil authority.

With this in mind we have made some extremely difficult decisions relating to our life together at St. Paul. First, the Midweek Lenten dinner for this evening is cancelled. We will still, since we are such a small group, gather for the midweek service at 7:00pm. This service, like our Sunday morning service, will be livestreamed through both our Facebook page (St. Paul Lutheran Church-LCMS) and our YouTube account (St Paul Lutheran Church Havelock NC). Full service bulletins for the Midweek and Sunday services will be available for download on our church web page, beginning with this week’s Midweek Lenten service.

Then, beginning on Sunday, March 22, we will be suspending all worship services, activities, Bible studies, fellowship dinners, and other events (including the Shepherd Group Meetings) at the church until further notice. Our concern is for the health and well-being of our church family and our community.

Have no fear, your spiritual well-being is of the utmost importance to me and the Elders as well. Therefore, we will continue to livestream the Sunday morning services at 9:00am. We will offer, via the internet, at 10:30am an interactive Bible study for the congregation through a group meeting platform entitled, “Zoom.” We ask members to please download the “Zoom” app to their phone or tablet or computer so that they may participate in this weekly Bible study. I will send out, via email, the Bible study on Friday that we will be using for the upcoming Sunday morning. If you are interested in participating in this Bible study, to help us in the church office create a dedicated Bible study email group, please contact the church office to let us know of your desire to be included on this list. Also, those on this list will be sent the link to access that week’s Bible study at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the class. While we understand this is not an ideal way of doing things, this for the time being is our temporary reality as a church family.

*“Bringing Jesus to the World!”*

Because it is important to also have the opportunity for Confession, Absolution, and the Reception of the Lord's Supper, beginning next week we will have the opportunity (per the encouraged guidelines) to have very small groups of 10 to 15 people to briefly assemble in Luther Hall for a special time to receive the Lord's Supper, much like the home gatherings of the early church. We will be utilizing a special online sign-up platform to help make sure the guidelines are being met. We will have times on Tuesday and Thursday at 10:00am and 7:00pm each of those days. While the numbers in each group will be small this should give us the opportunity to have approximately 60 members each week receive the Sacrament. If you do not feel comfortable participating in a group even of this size, I am more than willing to set-up a time for me to bring the Lord's Supper to your house. Please contact the church office or me directly to set-up a time.

Because these are such uncertain times there is great concern about the financial health for our church family. We have set-up an option on our church web page ([www.stpaulhavelock.com](http://www.stpaulhavelock.com)) for you and others to make either a one time or on-going donation. We also have available an automatic donation feature that drafts your tithe and offering from either your checking or savings account. In the past we have used a service entitled, VANCO, but we are navigating over to a new service through the Lutheran Church Extension Fund—*Joyful Response*. Attached with this email is an enrollment form that, if interested or currently enrolled in the old system, we kindly ask that you fill out the form completely and return it to the church office. You may also mail any contribution directly to the church. We understand that there may be some financial struggles and difficulties that may arise for people during this time, however, there are still bills that the church is incurring and ministries that we are trying to continue even if we are not personally together.

There is still great uncertainty as to what will happen with regards to Holy Week and Easter Sunday. There is also still great uncertainty with regards to Easter Breakfast. At this time the Elders and I have talked about having Easter Breakfast at a later time in conjunction with another one of the Church's festival holidays. Since we are limited with our ability to gather in groups outside, that greatly hinders our ability to perhaps have Easter service outside. Again, your patience and understanding is most appreciated during this time of great uncertainty.

We are presently making every effort to keep the church office open and running at full capacity. If there is anything that you or your family need (e.g. errands to the grocery store, pick-up of prescription medicines, help with yard work, help with reasonable household tasks, etc.) please do not hesitate to contact your Elder or the church office so that we may continue to help provide the best physical, as well as spiritual care for each of our members of St. Paul.

As I previously stated, these are tumultuous and very uncertain times for us as a nation, community, and church. While we may not know what tomorrow may bring, we have full faith and confidence in knowing that the Lord knows all things. There is great peace for us in the fact that all things are in His hands, under His control, and known to Him. May the Lord grant to each of you a quiet spirit, a restful heart, and a faith firmly rooted in the rock of our salvation—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Know that each of you are in my prayers and I am here to serve you to the best of my abilities as I am able. God's blessings and peace be with you always.

In His Service,



The Rev. James Daub, Pastor

***“Bringing Jesus to the World!”***