

In 1527 the plague returned to Wittenberg, Germany. Two hundred years earlier the plague had swept across Europe killing up to 40% of the population. Understandably, people were anxious and wondered what a safe and faithful response might be.

We are living in the time of the novel coronavirus. We are also living in the time of social media and constant, relentless news coverage. Each day brings new information about the COVID-19 virus and its impact in the nation and the world. And for the most part, it is not good news. Many have the same concerns as those in Luther's day. Many are anxious. But we need to stay calm, no matter what.

Luther's counsel, based on Scripture, is still sound. Respect the disease. Do not take unnecessary risks. God is with us, even in our greatest uncertainty and anxiety. And with Jesus, we know not to be afraid. Be careful, sensible, and most of all, be kind to each other.

We must look out for one another, and in the face of an invisible danger, we need to remember our neighbor's need as well as our own. Care for those who are most vulnerable; take every rational precaution for yourself and others, including those in our community that are older, have compromised immune systems or other underlying health issues that make illnesses more likely.

When anxiety is high in our culture, worship continues to be a primary location for the proclamation both of the Good News of Jesus Christ and of the continuing compassion and care of God in the midst of our humanity. It is a place where we can find solace and reassurance in the midst of our fears.

Good Shepherd takes seriously our call to care for all of God's children. In this time of COVID-19 and Influenza we want to pay special attention to how we can minimize the spread of illness across the population in general, but especially for those in our community at heightened risk of illness. For the time being we will not be passing the offering plate during worship but invite folks to place their offering in a basket as they come forward for communion. Additionally, in place of intinction we will be offering individual glasses of wine and grape juice during communion.

The Executive Board, Staff, and I will continue to pay close attention to updates from the CDC, the South Dakota Department of Public Health, and the Brown County Emergency Management Office and make adjustments as conditions warrant.

I am praying for all who are ill, all who are afraid, and all who simply don't know what to think. I know that God is with us in this wilderness, and that this Lenten season of anxiety will have an end. An Easter dawn will surely break, and together we will raise our voices in Alleluia once again.

Pastor Leland, on behalf the Executive Board

As the news and concern over the COVID-19 situation continues, we the people of Good Shepherd are taking prudent steps in order to keep our community healthy. As people of faith, we are called to love God and love one another. Our response to public health concerns is an embodiment of how we care for the least, the lost, and the lonely.

We are monitoring communications from local health officials and school districts. We are currently keeping all programs and Preschool running. Below is our current plan as we move forward. This plan may be adapted as needed.

**Personal Preparedness**

For 80% of cases, COVID-19 is a mild illness that does not require hospitalization. We cannot eliminate COVID-19 but we can reduce its spread by:

- Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, frequently
- Avoiding touching our face (mouth, nose, eyes)
- Staying home when sick until the illness is resolved
- Covering coughs and sneezes with tissue or upper arm and washing hands afterwards
- Staying away from others who are ill

For more info see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html>

**Our Plan as a community of faith:**

Stage	Indicator	Love neighbor by
Stage1 (Warning)	Confirmed Cases in South Dakota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All worship, ministry, and small groups are active</li> <li>• Extra sanitation and cleaning around the building</li> <li>• Communicating with words rather than touch</li> <li>• Encourage those who feel vulnerable or don't feel well to stay home</li> <li>• Encourage handwashing for 20 seconds or use of hand sanitizers</li> <li>• Using people who are gloved to serve food</li> </ul>
Stage2 (Alert)	Confirmed case within local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend those who are vulnerable stay home</li> <li>• Food ministries suspended (Sunday Fellowship Hour, midweek meals, meals at Food Pantry Distribution)</li> <li>• Extra cleaning and sanitation before and after worship</li> <li>• Follow Local School districts - If Aberdeen Public School does not have school, Little Lambs Preschool will be closed as well. Children and Youth ministries will also be suspended.</li> </ul>
Stage3 (Critical)	Confirmed case in church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All on site Worship, Church School, Meals, and Preschool suspended</li> <li>• No meetings held in church facilities</li> <li>• All encouraged to participate in online worship via Facebook Live posts by Pastor Leland</li> <li>• Department of Health will be in contact with church staff on steps moving forward.</li> </ul>

We will keep you updated on what stage we are on through website, Facebook, E-mail, and the greeting on the church answering machine.