

Gold Hill Evangelical Lutheran Church

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**Empowered by the Holy Spirit,
United to Serve**



The Nugget E-News

March 23, 2020

A Message from the Bishop

The Golden Rule and COVID-19

Dear Siblings in Christ,
"It's cancelled!" How many things in your life have been cancelled this week? School? Worship? Dinner out with friends? The NCAA tournament? In many ways it may feel like life itself was canceled during the past few days. But here are some things that I can assure you haven't been cancelled:



- God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit - not cancelled. Still with us, nothing can separate us.
- Lenten journey - not cancelled. Still following Jesus, Jesus still walking with us.
- Jesus' resurrection - Not cancelled. He is still risen! (Okay, in 3 weeks)
- Church - Not cancelled. The body of Christ is still Church together, though perhaps standing 6 feet apart for now.
- God's Creation - Not cancelled. Sun still shining. Still air to breathe and take a walk in.

Instead of only thinking about what has been cancelled, spend some time today thinking about what has not been cancelled in your life and take joy in it. Give thanks for it. Life continues on; differently yes, but life still goes on.

Another thing that has not been cancelled is the Golden Rule. Nor has God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves been removed. The Golden Rule - "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" - is still alive and functioning. And especially in this time of uncertainty, anxiety and fear, God still calls us to follow it.

The Golden Rule is found in one form or another in every major religion and many spiritualities, philosophies and secular ethical programs throughout the world. Jesus names it in his Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:12) and pushes us further to "love our neighbors as ourselves." But following this rule is not easy. **In order to follow the Golden Rule, we must be able to self-reflect honestly and have empathy for others.** We need to be able to step into another person's shoes and ask ourselves "How would I feel if I were in this situation and that were done to me? If I wouldn't like it, maybe I shouldn't do it them. If I would like it, then maybe I should consider do it for them." Perhaps this is where we go wrong. Turned in on ourselves and our own anxieties, we forget how to self-reflect and empathize with our fellow children of God.

So, what does it mean to follow the Golden Rule in the time of pandemic? Hopefully you can think of many different ways to "do unto others as you would want done unto you." Hopefully, you will find many new and exciting ways to "love your neighbor as yourself" during this time. Please watch for a pastoral letter from me later in the week describing various ways we as church can "do unto others" especially regarding giving,

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Holy Communion, conducting meetings, etc.

But in this newsletter piece, I am going to focus on one crucial way we need to follow the Golden Rule as we face COVID-19 together:

Postponing worship services and congregational gatherings. Because it is the best way we can love our neighbor right now, I am strongly recommending that all in-person worship services and other congregational gathering activities across the Montana Synod be suspended at least until Easter, at which time we will reassess the situation.

Some of you have already made that decision. Thank you for loving your neighbor and doing health unto others. But if you haven't made this decision yet, I encourage you to do so - for the sake of the health care workers who are already being pushed to the limits; for the sake of your grandparents, parents, kids and grand-kids and someone else's; for the sake of the person with lung disease or diabetes or heart conditions that just might breathe in one of your air droplets; for the sake of your community, your state, your nation and your world.

On NPR last week, there was a story about rural hospitals and how they will be affected when the virus hits their community. (See: [Rural Hospitals Brace for Coronavirus](#)). Many of you live in towns with a small hospital that you and your neighbor rely on when you get sick. But most of these rural hospitals don't have the staff, the resources, the equipment or the space to respond if the virus enters your town. Even our city hospitals will easily be overwhelmed if this thing takes off.

It's easy when we live in a rural place with so much space between our town and the next to think we're safe. I know, I've lived and served in such communities. But all it takes is one person who goes to "the city," catches the virus, brings it home, greets folks in worship and shares their new-found "friend" with others before the little hospital in the town is overwhelmed.

Put yourself in the shoes of the healthcare worker in that hospital or in any of our hospitals and clinics in the state; how would you want/need people to act? Hopefully, you would want others to respect your life and others enough to take every precaution against spreading the virus.

Hopefully you would want others to love you as much as they love themselves.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It's a simple command from God that, in times of fear and anxiety, we too quickly ignore. **But the only way we will get through this is if we walk this wilderness journey together, putting ourselves in others' shoes, taking on one another's burdens and going the extra mile.** This is what Jesus Christ did for us and does for us every day. Let us be Christ's body for one another, sharing the new life we know we've already received.

In the meantime, as you go through each day in physical isolation from each other, remember that "y'all [together] are the body of Christ and individually members of it. If one member suffers, all suffer together with [them]; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with [them]."

(1 Cor 12:27, 26)

Let us be one in Christ together!

Bishop Laurie

Gold Hill Lutheran Church Welcomes You!

Are you looking for a place to connect with a faithful community, grow in faith, and put your talents to work in serving others? Look no further, we welcome you at Gold Hill Lutheran Church! To learn more about the mission and ministry of Gold Hill Lutheran Church, please contact us at 406-723-4242.