

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA
CAPE CHURCH
EVANGELIES-LUTHERSE KERK IN SUIDER-AFRIKA
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EVANGELISH-LUTHERISCHE KIRCHE IM SÜDLICHEN AFRIKA
KAPKIRCHE

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16.3.2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We find ourselves in midst of troubled times and deep concern about the impact the Coronavirus has worldwide. It certainly has a global impact and we do not know what it will be like as numbers of infection grow daily, so are the numbers in our country. What are we called to do? How are we to respond as the Body of Christ?

I am in discussion with various ecumenical groups and together we are grappling with this challenge. Of great concern is what the effect will be if the most vulnerable communities are affected by Covid-19. Our already burdened health system will hardly manage. Our economy and resources will suffer and add an even deeper burden. But we are not alone in this. Jesus Christ has given us the assurance: *"Surely I am always with you until the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20)

In have seen many Lutheran Churches worldwide referring to Martin Luther's response to the "Black Plague" that hit his home own Wittenberg in 1527. His response we find in his writing titled: *"Whether one may flee from the deadly plague."* (www.rockrohr.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Luther... - PDF file)
Luther made it clear that it is our Christian duty to care for the neighbour and the responsibility of government to protect and provide services to its citizens. Therefore, we are in it together. He also stresses that the people should not be reckless and use common sense when it comes to hygiene and behaviour. He reminded them and he reminds us now that *"God has created medicines and has provided us with intelligence to guard and take care of the body. ... Use medicine; take potions which can help you; fumigate house, yard, and street; shun persons and places wherever your neighbour does not need your presence"*

So, let us strife to do the sensible and keep caring for the neighbour. Let us get practical in caring love.

I attach a letter from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, titled: "Worship in Times of Public Health Concerns: COVID-19/Coronavirus." – It offers helpful and practical ways for worship in ways that are not reckless and in which we use our common sense.

I encourage Church Committees to assess the local situation and the needs of its members and plan accordingly. Decide if, how and when services take place, and whether to continue with other functions.

Further, it is important that we adhere to directives given by government in terms of our meetings, travel and caring for one another.

Let us prayerfully consider on how to care for one another in sensible ways and seek ways to stay connected even while keeping physical distance we do not socially distance ourselves by keeping connected in prayer and through social media. Before taking decisions not to gather for worship and prayer, let us already try out technology like "ZOOM" or "Skype" to share the Gospel. -The list goes on. Let us be creative and practical to remain connected.

With kind regards and united in prayer

Gilbert Filter
Bishop