



*Embracing our mission to live, share, and celebrate with all people, God's love in Jesus Christ.*

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## A PASTORAL LETTER – WHAT'S NEXT?

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Dear members and friends of Lord of Life,

Thank you for your ongoing engagement and prayers as we adapt and flex with these changing days of quarantine in Southwest Ohio. I know that our ministry has not been what any of us expected the same, this Spring, but we pray that you have been blessed and encouraged by our moments of worship, Bible study, and other opportunities which engage our faith and help us serve our neighbors near and far.

Some of you continue to shelter-in-place as restrictions begin to lift, while others are wondering what all the fuss is about. "If we can shop and go out to eat, why can't we come to church?" These are important and complicated questions. One of our priorities as people of Christian faith is to protect and care for the most vulnerable among us.

As some in person activities and worship services begin to resume, we continue to monitor the guidelines set forth by the state of Ohio, the CDC, and our Southern Ohio ELCA Synod leadership, as well as gauge the specific needs of our context. The latest data, combined with our inability to socially distance ourselves in our space (only 35 of us will fit in the sanctuary, 21 in the fellowship hall), currently prevents us from gathering in person. It simply is too risky. Our church leadership has decided to continue online only Sunday worship, until at least July 5.

Even though we aren't back on campus, ministry continues. Here are some recent decisions and the weeks ahead:

### COVID-19 TASK FORCE

I am grateful for our COVID-19 Task Force, comprised of Greg Hasselbeck (chair), Liz Zimmerly (medical professional), Danielle Beneteau, Cara Hasselbeck, Art Hupp, Tad Metzger, and Pastor Corey, who have been working with me to assess our ability for in person activities and mitigation strategies. Like many organizations, we are crafting a re-entry strategy which includes phases. In each phase, this team will help us assess, implement, and evaluate, as we seek to minimize risks to our congregation, families, ministry partners, and community. Infection control practices, CDC resources, and guidance from various sources will chart our path forward.

Our first three priorities include:

1. Create a safe space for outside vendors, such as RTF Fire Protection (see below) to work in our building. At this time, anyone entering our building will be required to follow suggested guidelines for churches and businesses, including wearing a face covering, conducting a daily health assessment, maintaining good hygiene, regularly cleaning and sanitizing, and maintaining social distancing guidelines.
2. Maintain weekly online worship and explore ways to extend this form of worship even after we return to in person worship. We aren't sure what it will look like, but online worship will continue in some capacity.
3. Resume a schedule of limited staff hours. We work better when we're together. In the coming weeks, we hope to resume in person staff meetings (following all of the appropriate guidelines and protocols, of course), in an effort to better address current needs and move forward with alternate plans for our summer of ministry together.

### WORSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

A big thank you all who have read, played, sung, recorded, or otherwise helped to lead worship in our weeks of worshiping online. What a blessing to gain strength from the stability of our gathered community, even if we are physically scattered at this time.

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As mentioned above, Lord of Life's online worship presence is here to stay. Even when we do resume in person worship, some of our members may choose not to attend because of ongoing health risks or illness. We also recognize that God is using our current worship format to extend our witness far beyond West Chester.

We are using this time to research and anticipate this shift and are currently exploring what equipment and personnel we will need to embrace our growing digital presence.

#### COREY WAGONFIELD UPDATE

As you know, Pastor Corey Wagonfield recently graduated from Trinity Lutheran Seminary. Congratulations Corey! Under normal circumstances, we would be hosting a big bash and sending him off to his first call congregation with our love. Nothing is normal, though, right now.

During this strange season of ministry and life, many of the processes for calling a new pastor have been put on hold. With Bishop Dillahunt's permission and the approval of our church council on May 14, Pastor Corey will be continuing in ministry with us, until systems are back up and running for congregations to interview a candidate. Our incoming intern, Alec Brock, is aware and excited about the possibilities to learn and serve with Corey.

Corey and I, along with church council and staff, are figuring out specifics, but know that he will be stepping back from many of his duties as intern to allow a full internship experience for Alec Brock, including a limited presence in teaching and preaching moments. That said, we are excited to leverage his extensive gifts to help us lean into this new era of post-COVID-19 ministry and look forward to throwing the Wagonfields a bash when the time is right.

#### ALEC BROCK ARRIVAL AND WELCOME

Our next two-year intern will begin ministry with us on July 1. Please keep your eyes and ears open to invitations to shower him with cards and help stock his pantry. We don't know what a welcome celebration may look like, but we are eager to surround Alec with the hospitality of Lord of Life. More information soon.

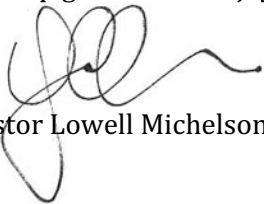
#### SHARE THE LIGHT UPDATE

Thank you for your ongoing support of our three-year capital campaign, *Share The Light*. Although we would like to be worshipping in our sanctuary, this turns out to be a perfect time for the installation of our fire suppression. This Wednesday, RTF Fire Protection will begin their two month process of installing a sprinkler system throughout the entire building. In addition to their many procedures and protocols, we have put safety measures in place, as mentioned above, to ensure they are safe while working on our campus. Keep your eyes on our social media platforms and your email to watch the progress.

Our *Share The Light* teams will be discussing our next steps in planning and construction, as we enter a new phase in sanctuary renewal and building expansion. As we move forward, we anticipate the need to tweak some of our original priorities, as we embrace the new realities of ministry during and after COVID-19. We'll keep you posted.

I pray that you and your loved ones are well, and that God continues to bless and guide you as you step into these early days of summer. Thank you again for the many ways you love this church and help ministry happen here and beyond. Together, we are bringing God's hope to the world!

In deep gratitude and joy,



Pastor Lowell Michelson