



**Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

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Bishop Michael L. Rhyne

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*Gracious God, it is good for us to gather as your beloved in community. We treasure your presence with us in word and meal, song and prayer. Be with us in these days when gathering together as often as we would like is not possible. When we must be apart for reasons of safety, we trust that you surround us with your sheltering wings. Encourage us in connecting as we are able, reaching out to our neighbors in need and being persistent in prayer. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our constant companion. Amen. [From Prayers For A Time of Public Health Concern; ELCA]*

Beloved in Christ,

In these uncertain days, I want to remind you God is with us. While we may not be gathering together in our church buildings, we can gather our prayers together for all those affected by the Covid-19 virus. I urge you to continue to pray for each other and for your pastor and congregational leaders as they try to make the best decisions possible in an unprecedented situation.

Your congregation may be one of the many in our Synod that runs on a very tight budget. Not holding worship for these next two Sundays could be a severe financial hardship. That is why I am strongly encouraging you to send your tithes and offerings to your congregation even if you cannot be there in person. You may do that electronically if your congregation is set up for online giving or you may mail your donation. Either way you choose to give, your gifts matter. They are important to the ministries of the congregation and the community.

Over and over again in times of distress in our nation we have seen people come together and unite behind the common cause of loving our neighbors. We watched it happen with 9-11, Hurricane Katrina and Sandy, and the shooting at the synagogue in Pittsburgh. In each of those incidences, the church boldly witnessed to the power of Christ's love, grace, and mercy. We have that same opportunity now. Sharing your gift with your congregation allows the love, grace, and mercy of Christ to be shared with those most in need.

Your congregation may be able to offer devotions, prayers, or worship experiences via electronic means over the next few weeks or by mail. Please take part as much as you are able and support each other as we move through this crisis.

Thank you for supporting your congregation and its ministry. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for all the ways you witness to Christ's love in your life. You are making a difference.

May God continue to bless and keep you,

*+ Bishop Michael L. Rhyne*

+Bishop Michael Rhyne

