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Siblings in Christ,

Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Good Shepherd. In these days of special concern for the most vulnerable among us, Jesus is our model of loving care and compassion and, in all things, our source of light and hope.

This week has been one of great concern and anxiety for our community and beyond. On Wednesday morning, our Governor, Jay Inslee, called on all people in Washington State to make important changes that affect our life together. At the most basic level, this involves a form of “social distancing” that are intended to minimize the number of people who will become ill from the coronavirus. “This is not a time to be going out into public and close contact with others” Inslee said. In keeping with this, he issued a ban on public gatherings of more than 250 people. Although we do not meet this threshold, based the recommendations and requirements that Jeff Duchin, the Public Health Officer for Seattle and King County, discussed, which included extending the ban to all public gatherings under 250 people if the host institution “is not able to meet all public health criteria and guidelines, including social distancing (remaining six feet apart), adequate sanitation, and regular health checks.” This obviously affects our worship and all the other gatherings of small groups at Mount Cross.

Then on Thursday, Gov. Inslee issued an executive order closing all schools in King, Snohomish, and Pierce Counties until April 24th. In considering this decision by the governor and all the information and recommendations being share with us through the department of health, myself and the church council, have determined that we are unable to meet all the public health criteria on a consistent basis.

This has thus led us to SUSPEND all activities at Mount Cross until further notice. This decision goes into effect today March 13th and will extend until further notice.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

ALL PUBLIC GATHERINGS AT MOUNT CROSS ARE SUSPENDED. This includes all Sunday and Wednesday worship services, all small group activities, and all meetings.

Please know that while the building may be closed, you can call our church office at any time during normal office hours. Amanda and Pastor JT will be here to serve in every way that we can during these challenging times. So, if you have any cares, concerns, needs, or pastoral emergencies, please do not hesitate to reach out to any one of us!

ALTHOUGH WE WILL NO LONGER GATHER TOGETHER IN PERSON FOR WORSHIP, SINGING, STUDY, AND PRAYER, WE WILL BE OFFERING AN ONLINE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE. PASTOR JT, CONI, AND A FEW WORSHIP LEADERS WILL POST WORSHIP ONLINE EVERY WEEK AT 10:00 A.M. ON SUNDAY MORNING. You may worship from your home with us at that time or go to the link at any time that works best for you.

DAILY PRAYER, FEATURING SCRIPTURE READINGS, MUSIC, AND A DAILY MESSAGE FROM ONE OUR PASTORS WILL BE POSTED EVERY AFTERNOON ON MONDAY-FRIDAY. Again, you can open the link at that time or whenever you choose to set time apart for this spiritual practice. This will begin on Monday, March 16.

FINALLY, WE WANT TO ADD AN IMPORTANT WORD ABOUT FINANCIAL GIVING. It was very moving to hear our own Pierce County leaders call on all people today to make special efforts to continue giving vital support to the organizations that are needed most in times like this, including faith communities. We will not be physically together for a while, but our monetary gifts are essential to the mission we share at Mount Cross. We are trusting that our budgeted income for offerings will remain strong during the coming weeks. You can make sure this happens by:

Mailing your offering gifts to us. If you have them, we prefer that you please use the offering envelopes you received from Mount Cross

Set up a Bank Bill Payment method with your bank and start a new habit of using this regularly

Give online at our website. <https://www.mountcrosslutheran.org>

If you have any questions about or would like assistance setting up your gift through a regular automated means of giving such as the through the website, call the office and we can help you set that up.

Most important of all, in this time when “social distancing” is the phrase of the day, please remember that this only applies to physical space. In every other way, this is a time to draw together relationally and to increase the love and support that we offer to one another and to all neighbors in need. In the Gospel reading for this coming Sunday, Jesus breaks through barriers of all kinds to show solidarity with a Samaritan woman who he meets at the well. It inspires all of us to do the same as we creatively and compassionately find ways to express solidarity with the whole people of God.

The love of God surrounds you each day and Holy Spirit inspires you to be the heart and hands of God’s compassion in the world.

Pastor JT