



South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

March 12, 2020

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Earlier this week we indicated that our LEAD event, scheduled for this Saturday, would go on as planned, with precautions in place. Information, events and advisories have escalated rapidly since that time. I realized that a decision about LEAD should be reconsidered and sought the collaborative counsel of the synod's Executive Committee. This morning we reached a decision that out of concern both for attendees and for participating in the social distancing that is now being advised, **the LEAD event for Saturday will not be held, but will be rescheduled to a future time.** We will look for the opportunity to reschedule this fine line-up of resources and workshop leaders when it is once again safe to gather large numbers of people. The food that is ordered and already being prepared will be distributed to needy recipients through Good Shepherd's God's Hands and Feet Food Ministry serving the children's after school meals program of Meadowridge Library and other community groups. We will also explore holding webinars on some of the topics scheduled for workshops.

I know many of you are wrestling with decisions about holding events in your own congregations. It is important to heed the advice now being clearly given to provide for "social distance," which is easier to do with small gatherings than large ones. The CDC advises cancelling gathering of 250 people or more; smaller gatherings should consider caution in any setting where people are close to one another. It is important that we follow advice that can result in the slowing of the spread of this disease.

The ELCA has excellent and constantly-updated advisory information on its website at <https://elca.org/PublicHealth>. See the section related to Covid-19. There is good information related to worship practices in these circumstances there as well, including cautionary steps in worship, livestreaming and other steps.

If worship is cancelled, or if people stay away for health concerns, financial support of the congregation's ministry may suffer. Remind people that for the ministry to stay strong, ongoing support is important. If you would like help in understanding how to set up electronic giving in your congregation, please call Vicki Hanrahan here at the synod office.

The gathering of people in our faith communities is central to our life as God's people. It is also an avenue of loving one another and our neighbor to recognize there may be times when not gathering expresses that love. If you should need to cancel worship or other events, it would be well to frame that decision as one done out of love for the neighbor... which is also a fundamental feature of our life as God's people in this place.

I am grateful for your wise and compassionate leadership in these days.

Grace and Peace,

Peter Rogness
Interim Bishop