



Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Dear Partners in God's Mission,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who loves us with a love that will never let us go! Holy Week is upon us! And as we prepare to enter into Christ's Passion, many of you have questions as to what kinds of celebrations, rites and gatherings are appropriate in light of the Governor's "Stay Safe at Home" Executive Order.

As we move into the third week of restrictions, I know it is beginning to weigh on many of us. That said, there is no exception to the Governor's order during Holy Week. Not only will it be irresponsible and dangerous to gather or to process publicly on Passion Sunday or other days, but it would also be a poor witness to our neighbor whose well-being should be our primary concern.

The Governor's order does NOT allow gatherings of worshippers outdoors or in any other setting, even in cars. It DOES allow religious leaders and key volunteers who are not in the high-risk category to gather in groups of less than 10 to make video or live-streamed services. I have heard of one congregation in which the pastors will drive through the town waving branches and capturing this on video to be shared



later. I believe that this is a good, creative solution (provided the driver keeps eyes on the road!)

Dear Friends, this week of our Lord's passion, I wonder if we might find an opportunity in this crisis to enter ever more deeply into the passion of our Lord. He who was deprived of his friends, separated from humanity, suffered and died innocently, surely walks with us in these times and even invites us to connect with our loneliness and sorrow, even our fear. He invites us to understand, down in our bones that all of these spiritual and emotional trials are not aberrations from the norm but a profound part of what it means to be human every day. Jesus, God incarnate, freely entered into this state for you and for me. Thanks be to God!

If there is some way I or my staff can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out to me!

In Christ our Brother,

Bishop Bill Tesch

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