

December 31, 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

While so many of us are eager to put 2020 behind us, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the compassion, courage, and commitment of this marvelous congregation. Through your faithful generosity, we have responded to the needs of our community and congregation by sponsoring blood drives, donating literally tons of goods and clothing, collecting nearly a thousand mittens and hats, supporting the vital ministries of numerous partners, bringing groceries and meals to members in our congregation, and by sharing meals with those facing food shortages (our weekly Community Meal is now serving nearly two thousand meals a week!).

Even while witnessing to God's love in such tangible and important ways, we also have been worshiping virtually in numbers that are greater than at any point in Mount Olivet's history, have more than 500 people actively involved in Bible-study, and continue to support each other through phone calls, notes, Zoom gatherings, and most especially prayer. Through all of this, we also demonstrated our staunch commitment both to protect our members and community and to do everything we can to slow the spread of a pandemic that has taken far, far too many lives. I know that our decision to refrain from in-person Sunday worship has been difficult for all of us, but I also believe that it is exactly what our Lord desired from us. I look forward to gathering together again and, while that day is not yet here, I am increasingly confident that it is on the horizon. For now, we will continue to suspend in-person Sunday worship and to take all necessary precautions related to other in-person gatherings at church.

This has been an extraordinary year, not only for the many and at times monumental challenges that have beset us, but also because of the grace and blessings we have been privileged to receive and share. 2020, while difficult, was still "the year of our Lord," and so many of us have been reminded of just how important our faith and congregation is. I look forward to advancing the mission of Mount Olivet with you in the new year of grace that is 2021.

Blessings to you and yours for a safe, healthy, and hopeful New Year!

Pastor Lose
Senior Pastor

November 11, 2020

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

A week ago I promised an update on how the recent and unprecedented COVID surge will affect our worship plans as we move into Advent and Christmas. I've recorded a video below to share that update as well as lay out in greater detail the criteria and rationale we have been using at Mount Olivet to make decisions moving forward about the kinds and sizes of programs and worship services we are offering, including in-person Sunday worship. As always, know how grateful I am for your faithfulness, courage, patience, generosity, and good spirit. We will get through this, and we'll get through it together.

Blessings to you in Christ,
Pastor Lose

[Watch Here](#)

November 6, 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

During what has been a turbulent week in our community and country, I have four brief things to share with you.

The first is simply to say thank you! For your fidelity, generosity, prayers, patience, and more. 2020 did not turn out to be the year we anticipated or hoped for, and certainly not what we imagined our 101st year of ministry would look like. Yet you have come together to keep Mount Olivet strong, make the sacrifices necessary to protect our neighbors, and respond to the needs of our community. Thank you. Even more, thank God for you.

Second, I would again invite you to pray. To pray for our democratic processes, for those leaders who currently serve in office and those newly elected, and that peace and justice would prevail in our community and country. As persons of faith, we entrust our cares and the fortunes of our country to the God we know in Jesus. Confident that the future is in God's hands, we can remain voices of calm, reason, and hope in the present.

Given the series of record-breaking days in our state and country of new coronavirus infections, it is probably not surprising that the third thing I need to share is that we will continue to suspend in-person Sunday worship for the time being. Leading health professionals in our state and across the country have warned that we are coming into the most dangerous phase of the pandemic yet and that large indoor gatherings continue to account for much of the spread of the disease. I will follow up with you soon with more information about how this will impact our holiday activities and worship and to share the key health markers we are looking at to determine when we can resume in-person Sunday worship safely.

Fourth and finally, I would urge you to take advantage of the spiritual resources Mount Olivet offers. While it's easy to focus on what we can't do, it's important to remember what is possible and available: online worship on Sundays, midweek prayer in our sanctuaries, devotions throughout the week, volunteer opportunities, educational classes – we currently have more than 500 Mount Olivet members participating in Bible study! – and more. In addition, praying for each other – and telling someone that you're praying for them – is a way to feel more connected to your community. Yes, there is much that we can do, and much for which we can be thankful.

We will get through this difficult season and year, dear Mount Olivet family, we will get through it together and, by God's grace, we will come out the other side stronger.

Blessings for health and hopefulness to you in Christ Jesus our Lord,
Pastor Lose
Senior Pastor

September 30, 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

These are significant days for our congregation and family of faith and I am grateful for your part in helping Mount Olivet continue to be "the church that cares." A few highlights:

- We are having an incredible response to our stewardship drive-through meals, with total participation exceeding last year's and setting an all-time record (twice!) for the number of meals served on a single evening. And I was just plain thrilled to see so many of you!
- In addition to hosting our confirmation service online, we were pleased that more than 150 of our 163 confirmands attended our drive-through confirmation celebration.
- This Sunday, we are launching "Going God's Way," an online worship service for children and families.
- Beginning October 7, we will offer an in-person service of Holy Communion at noon on Wednesdays at both campuses. More information, including a link to register, will be available on the website by Sunday.
- And... while serving 2600 meatball dinners over the past three weeks, we also shared more than 5000 community meals during that same time period with those in greatest need, averaging more than 1500 meals shared each week.

In so many significant ways, Mount Olivet continues to live into its mission to be a place that helps individuals and families believe the good news of Christ, belong to a servant congregation that loves God by loving our neighbor, and become the people and church God needs us to be. There is vital ministry happening every day at Mount Olivet, and you are an essential part of that. Thank you!

As part of our efforts to love our neighbor and care for our community, we have suspended our large-group indoor gatherings, including Sunday worship. These significant decisions are made in consultation with medical professionals, pastoral colleagues, and church leadership. As we have seen spikes in COVID infection rates throughout the Upper Midwest (last week the Centers for Disease Control described Minnesota as being in a state of "uncontrolled spread" of the coronavirus), as 80% of infections come from large indoor gatherings including church services, and as doctors both within and beyond the Mount Olivet community continue to advise against gathering indoors for worship, we will continue suspending in-person Sunday worship for the month of October. We are grateful to continue providing meaningful, spirit-filled worship online and long for the day we can safely gather together in person. Until then, we will be steadfast in following the advice of our medical professionals in doing all that we can to combat this virus, care for the vulnerable, and come through this pandemic as quickly as possible.

I cannot tell you how much your support – your prayers, your pledges, your patience and perseverance – mean to me, all of your pastors, and the whole of the Mount Olivet Church staff. We are in this together. We will come through this together. And, by God's grace, we will come through this stronger on the other side, equipped to continue being a place of hope, help, and healing.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Lose
Senior Pastor

August 27, 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you." These words of the Apostle Paul to his beloved congregation in Philippi capture so well my thoughts and prayers for all of you, never more so than during this season of unprecedented and unforeseen challenges. During this time, we have not simply endured but, by God's grace, flourished, and I want to share some of that good news with you along with several updates about our path moving forward.

Some highlights of the last six months:

- Sunday worship has averaged more than 3600 views a week. While it's hard to estimate the number of persons represented by a "view," even a modest estimate – multiplying it by 1.5, for instance – would represent a larger virtual attendance than we have had physically at any time of the year, let alone during the summer, in the history of our congregation.
- Giving has been strong, coming close to or exceeding last year's totals each month. (Thank you!) While we have experienced significant losses in other revenue categories (Sunday offering is equivalent to about 65% of the budget), we have adjusted staffing and other expenses to reflect changes in revenue and current ministry needs and are on firm financial ground.
- We have initiated several significant outreach efforts including collecting thousands of pounds of food and other essential items for those in greatest need during our Monday donation drives, and we are sharing more than 1500 meals a week through our Tuesday and Thursday grab-and-go Community Meals.
- We have created two new resource pages on our website – Together @ Mount Olivet and Mount Olivet CAREs to aid members in nurturing their faith amid the pandemic and educating and equipping us to work for a world of greater equality.
- Significant progress has been made on planned capital improvements at both campuses, all ahead of schedule and on or under budget. We have also completed an additional project in creating the Columbarium at the West Campus through the generous gift of a Mount Olivet household and dedicated in memory of former Senior Pastor John Hogenson.
- In addition to making so much of our worship and programming available online, over the summer we began opening our buildings for funerals and weddings limited in numbers and with all necessary precautions, for personal prayer and reflection in our two sanctuaries on Wednesday mornings, and for staff-led small group gatherings, all in accord with our Forward Together plan and in response to the health markers in our community.

At this point, and recognizing both the progress our larger community has made in the fight against COVID-19 and the significant risk the pandemic still poses, we have made several important decisions about our congregational life. First, all large-group, indoor programming has been suspended or moved online for the remainder of 2020. This includes our choirs, confirmation classes, and Sunday School, each of which will be supported in other, primarily digital, means. We simply do not believe it is yet safe to gather together in the numbers these groups involve. By making a decision for the whole fall season, rather than month-by-month, we free staff from juggling multiple contingency plans and allow them to focus on the many programs we will be offering these and other groups in digital formats. This also invites our members participating in these groups to plan realistically and hopefully for the coming months.

We have also postponed several significant in-person events planned for the fall, including the Mount Olivet Gala sponsored by our Mount Olivet Homes' Auxiliary, the Holiday Boutique sponsored by our Mount Olivet Church Women, and our culminating Centennial Worship service at Orchestra Hall on November 15. Members of both MOHA and MOCW are at work either exploring ways to sponsor an online version of their event or planning for next year's event, and the Centennial worship will be rescheduled to a time when we are beyond the pandemic and will have, indeed, great cause for thanksgiving and celebration.

Finally, we will continue making decisions about Sunday worship on a monthly basis and, for the month of September, will continue to suspend gathering in-person. This decision, as with all others, has been made in accord with our commitments to listen to the best advice from our health professionals; prioritize the safety of our members, staff, and community neighbors; and witness to our faith in God by obeying Christ's command to "love your neighbor," even when that means making sacrifices.

I recognize that not having in-person worship has, indeed, been a sacrifice, and I assure you that all of our decisions are made with both great care and fervent prayer. I also recognize that some churches, including a few ELCA congregations, have returned or will soon be returning to in-person worship. As we've seen in the world of education, business, sports, and entertainment, different organizations may reach different decisions in response to their own distinct circumstances and commitments. Similarly, we are trying to make decisions that seem best for Mount Olivet and the communities we serve. Particularly in the next few weeks, with the return of students to schools and colleges in a variety of formats and the unpredictability that entails, we believe this is the best way we can support our congregation and community in flourishing amid this global pandemic.

As we continue to do our part in the struggle against the coronavirus, there is a great deal to be excited about regarding our fall programming and the overall health of our congregation. From a drive-through meatball dinner to a meaningful Confirmation service, and from a new and exciting Bible study opportunity to programming and support for families of young children and more, we look forward to continuing to strengthen our faith, support each other, and serve our neighbors. All of this is made possible through your faithful support, and I look forward to the growth in generosity, programming, and outreach we anticipate in the coming weeks.

I will close where I began, with tremendous gratitude for you, the family of faith we call Mount Olivet. Your faith, your patience, your hopefulness, your generosity, and your willingness to sacrifice in service to our neighbors has been inspiring, and God continues to be at work through all these things for the sake of this world God loves so much. We will get through this. We will get through this together. And, by God's grace, we will come out stronger on the other side. Until that time, know that I hold you in prayer, always with thanksgiving.

Yours in Christ,
David J. Lose
Senior Pastor

June 30, 2020

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

The summer months are upon us, and what a strange, different, and challenging summer it has been! We have not gathered for worship together since mid-March. Our beloved Cathedral of the Pines is not receiving campers. We will not have our God's Kids Sing and other youth camps that mark our summer season. While we miss these programs and traditions, none of this means that Mount Olivet hasn't been active. We continue to make joyful and faithful worship available digitally, we have moved many of our educational and other resources online, we are now serving more than 1000 meals a week via our Grab-and-Go Community Meals, and we are collecting thousands of pounds of canned goods and other essential items weekly to share with our community partners to help take care of the vulnerable in our community.

A question I hear frequently, most often asked with great appreciation for all we as a congregation are doing, is when life at Mount Olivet will return to "normal." That is a tough question to answer. When I think of "normal," I think of the last worship service we shared in person on March the 8th and the many and well-attended activities and gatherings we sponsor. The question I ask myself in return is, "When do we think it will be safe to gather 700 people or more inside, knowing that many are vulnerable?" Moreover, when I consider the necessary precautions that would be needed in large worship settings – limited attendance, staggered services in order to clean, entering our sanctuaries spaced six-feet apart, all wearing masks, no choirs in the loft and no congregational singing – I realize that the worship we are currently offering online is probably closer to what most of us expect

Minnesota, on the whole, continues to see dropping rates of infections and levels of hospitalizations, which is all to the good. But I am keenly aware, as perhaps you are also, that some of the states that opened most quickly are now seeing infections and hospitalizations surge, placing new stresses on their health care systems. Often, restaurants and houses of worship are among those places where the disease is spreading most quickly, and I do not want that to be Mount Olivet's story. For this reason, we will continue to operate with an abundance of caution and not plan on in-person worship for July and August.

In the meantime, we are planning a variety of "worship-like events" that will serve as a "soft opening" and provide opportunities for us to gather in smaller groups, spend time in our sanctuaries and other important places, and be nourished in spirit via gatherings that are both safe and meaningful. In these and other ways we can begin to create a "new normal" that will feed our spirit and help us protect the gains that Minnesotans have made in combatting the pandemic. I hope to share details of those events in the coming weeks. For now, know that we are committed to continue supporting you in your walk of faith and that we are also grateful for your prayers and support.

As we face the historic challenges before us, we will do so focused on what unites us in the Gospel, reliant on God's promises, and confident that we will get through this, we will get through it together and, by God's grace, we will come through stronger on the other side.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Lose
Senior Pastor

June 12, 2020

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

We are one church. You've likely heard that before: We are one church at two campuses. We are also one church with members of a multitude of ages, backgrounds, experiences, and convictions. And we are one church coming from numerous communities with different gifts to offer, struggles to share, and hopes to live into. In and through all things, we are one church.

I start with this affirmation because we are currently facing enormous, even historic, challenges, including a once-in-a-century pandemic and the greatest social unrest and call for reform than we have experienced in fifty years. Moreover, we live at a time when the strong cultural impulse is to define ourselves not by what we share and might unite us but instead by what divides us. If we are to face these challenges and seek to flourish amid them, and if we are to give witness to our faith in Christ to those around us, we need to remember and remind each other that, as St. Paul writes, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Below this letter, you will find two documents responding to the two historic challenges we face. The first is a statement regarding Mount Olivet's commitments to racial equity, justice, and reconciliation, with a summary of five commitments up front and a more detailed explanation of each commitment below. Developed in conversation with our pastoral team and in consultation with the Executive Committee of our Congregation Council, it will serve as the foundation for a series of actions we are now taking and will continue to take as we seek to be a place of hope, help, and healing to our communities. We are currently creating space on our website to describe in more detail the concrete steps we will take, resources we can share, and opportunities to get involved as we strive to become the congregation God desires us to be, and I will notify you when that is available. Mount Olivet has a long tradition of being a servant congregation, and we will draw on that tradition and our historic strengths to continue to give witness to God's love for the whole world.

The second document shares a four-phased approach to moving through this pandemic toward more normal operations. You will notice immediately that there are no fixed dates to the various phases, but rather community health markers that will guide our decisions. From March 13th through May, we have been in Phase 1, a time marked by a massive effort to make our worship available online and provide a multitude of other spiritual resources and learning opportunities digitally. As of June 1, we moved to Phase 2, and as we cross the peak of the virus, likely later this summer, we will enter Phase 3. I will share more detailed information in the coming weeks about the implications of this movement forward.

Please know that I am both aware and grateful that one of the significant strengths of Mount Olivet has been to be thoughtful and intentional in times of crisis in order to keep us focused and united on the Gospel of Christ. That will continue to be our practice as we move forward into a future we trust God is fashioning. While we may at times disagree on particular actions as we respond to these two monumental challenges before us, I hope and pray that we can agree that God invites us to work to establish a world where all of God's children are accorded dignity, safety, and respect. We are one church. And so I remain confident that we will get through these crises together and, by God's grace, come out on the other side stronger.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Lose

[Statement of Commitment](#)
[Forward Together](#)

May 28, 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." —Psalm 121

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

I write to offer some clarity related to ongoing decisions at Mount Olivet regarding in-person worship and other gatherings. Three principles have guided all of our decisions:

1. We will listen to the best advice from our health professionals in limiting the spread of the coronavirus.
2. We will prioritize the health and safety of our members, staff, and community neighbors.
3. We will trust in God's promises and witness to our faith by obeying Christ's command to "love your neighbor," even when that means making sacrifices.

At this point, and in light of these principles, we have decided to continue suspending in-person worship services and in-person, indoor gatherings through the end of June. Although I long for the day we can come together, I do not believe that is yet prudent or safe. As one of our Mount Olivet members, an internal medicine physician working with COVID patients, recently wrote to me, "Our hospitalization rates continue to grow, and we are fully expecting the numbers of COVID patients to increase as the state opens up. I've been watching my patients suffer and die alone, without the comfort of loved ones. This tragedy is not something I want any more of our members to endure."

The question of re-opening churches has gained significant attention of late. I think it is important to remember that even as civic guidelines change, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach. For a church the size of Mount Olivet—with two campuses and multiple services, most of which are attended by hundreds of people—the return to safe in-person worship will almost certainly be at a later date than churches which are significantly smaller.

We look forward with hope to a time when we can gather for worship and other meaningful events. In the meantime, I would ask that you keep in mind two additional things:

- We are the Church of Jesus Christ because of who we are and what we do, not because of where we gather.
- The ministry of Mount Olivet continues powerfully through online worship, manifold digital resources, continued care for each other through a variety of means, and vital outreach to those in need.

Next week I will review with the Congregation Council a document that will outline a staged approach to moving forward toward resuming in-person worship and gatherings and I look forward to sharing that with you shortly thereafter.

Before closing, I want to acknowledge what a painful and difficult week it has been in Minneapolis and our surrounding communities. At times like this – when we may wonder what we can say or do that will make a meaningful difference – I find one of the best things we can do is turn to prayer, and I invite you to do that in the coming days. Prayers for this congregation, for our community, and for our world. Prayers for healing and reconciliation. Prayers for a world that reflects the justice and peace God desires for all of us. And prayers that we may find courage and compassion sufficient to the challenges of the day.

We will get through this, and we will get through it together.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Lose

May 12, 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

I am writing to share three developments as we continue to do our part to limit the spread of the coronavirus that has devastated so many parts of the world.

First, we will continue suspending in-person worship for the rest of May and in-person, indoor gatherings through the month of June. As you know, we have not yet reached the peak of the spread of the virus in Minnesota and so will continue to follow the advice of our chief medical, health care, and civic leaders and exercise great caution regarding any and all Mount Olivet gatherings.

Second, we made the decision this past week to suspend all of the regularly scheduled Cathedral of the Pines camping sessions for the 2020 season. If, later this summer, there is sufficient testing for the virus available or we are able to gather in larger groups, we will explore the possibility of creating a new schedule of offerings, prioritizing those youth approaching the close of their opportunity to be campers. This was, as you can imagine, an incredibly difficult decision and was made entirely to protect our kids, their families, our staff, and our communities. I am grateful for the leadership of Kristi Youngdahl (Camp Director), Kris Ericksen (Camp Coordinator), and the Cathedral of the Pines Board.

Third, while we continue to suspend in-person worship and gatherings, we are preparing for our eventual return to what we know as life at Mount Olivet. One component of that preparation includes refurbishing and upgrading our worship and gathering spaces at both campuses and completing several significant maintenance projects. Funds for this work were already set aside by action of the Council and will now be completed ahead of schedule and, as a result, under budget. A second component of our preparations to move forward include developing a staged plan for returning to more normal operations. This multi-phased plan will be based on the advice of the chief health and medical professionals across our country and aligned with priorities and check-points articulated by state and federal officials. It will anticipate resuming our regular activities and patterns of gathering while also acknowledging the need for staging a phased return to more normal life to avoid a potential resurgence of the virus and, as a result, an increased toll on the health, lives, and livelihoods of our community. I expect to be able to share that plan with you in early June and am eager to move forward together.

As I have said before, all of the decisions regarding worship and other gatherings reflect our commitment to follow the best advice available to help us get through this critical and fragile time together. There is no doubt that the challenges before us are significant, but there is also no doubt that our Lord has furnished us with gifts, generosity, courage, and faith sufficient to meet these challenges. Our circumstances may have changed, but our mission to share the good news of the Gospel in word and deed has not. As always, I am so grateful for your support and prayers as we move forward. We will get through this. We will get through it together. And, by the grace of God, we will come out stronger on the other side.

Blessings to you in Christ,
Pastor Lose

April 22, 2020

Update On In-Person Gatherings In May 2020

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." —Psalm 121

Dear Mount Olivet Family,

When we gathered on January 12 to celebrate one hundred years of faithful ministry at Mount Olivet, it would have been all but impossible to imagine that a mere two months later we would suspend in-person worship. We are now six weeks into a "new normal," worshipping together online, facilitating Confirmation and Sunday School with the help of web-based videos, conducting Bible studies and meetings on Zoom, making a variety of faith resources available via our website, transforming our Thursday Community Meal into a "grab-and-go" event that more and more people depend upon, and keeping in touch by text, phone, and social media. We did not expect any of this, yet we have adapted and even flourished under challenging circumstances.

I am writing today to let you know that we will continue to suspend in-person gatherings through the end of May and suspend in-person worship through at least May 17, making a decision about the rest of the month early in May. According to recommendations outlined by the President, the first of three phases for states to begin easing restrictions on gatherings is to begin only once the number of new cases of COVID-19 have dropped for two consecutive weeks. While we have done a very good job in Minnesota in slowing the spread of the disease, we continue to see increases in new cases, hospitalizations, and deaths every day. If we were to turn the corner by the end of the Governor's stay-at-home order on May 4, two weeks later would put us at May 18. And if we have not yet reached the peak and continue to need to suspend our gatherings to reflect our love and concern for our neighbors, we will do so.

All of the decisions regarding worship and other gatherings reflect our commitment to follow the best advice of our medical and civil authorities in order to help us move together through this critical and fragile time. Please believe me when I say that no one longs for the opportunity to worship together in person more than I do. Please also believe that I will not recommend that gathering until I know we can do so safely and not put our members, neighbors, and larger community at risk. Many of you have written to share with me how meaningful worship was during Holy Week and Easter. Those services — and all the other ministries of Mount Olivet — continue to depend on your generous and faithful giving. Indeed, your giving has never been more important. If you cannot give at this time because of the economic impact of the pandemic, then instead offer your prayers for this congregation and community, knowing that you are also being held in prayer. If you are doing well amid the challenges of the day, then please consider giving more, stepping up to support the congregation when other members cannot. We are a family, after all, and families look after each other.

Please remember that if you need to be in touch with a staff person, you can call 612.926.7651 to leave a message, and the appropriate staff member will respond as soon as possible. If you need to speak with a pastor regarding a pastoral emergency, you can call the pastor-on-call line at 612.916.9016. We will get through this. We will get through it together. And we will come out stronger on the other side, for we are the people of God, chosen, called, and equipped to bear God's love into all the world.

Blessings to you in Christ,
Pastor Lose
Senior Pastor

April 7, 2020 - Holy Week and Easter Update

Jesus said to Mary, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" And Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!", and she told them that he had said these things to her. –John 20:17-18

Dear Members of our Mount Olivet Family,

Singing "Crown Him with Many Crowns" as the choirs and pastors process with palms into the sanctuary. Seeing the choir-loft packed with members of the Cathedral Choir past and present to sing Dubois' hauntingly beautiful Seven Last Words. Hearing the stories of the disciples as they recreate da Vinci's tableau in the Living Lord's Supper. Listening to the passion story as candles are extinguished at the Good Friday Tenebrae service. And, of course, celebrating our Lord's Resurrection with brass, orchestra, choirs, flowers, alleluias, and more!

These are the experiences that make our observation of Holy Week and celebration of Easter both meaningful and special. And, this year, memories of these experiences make this a poignant, even difficult week, as we continue to suspend in-person worship and gatherings as we combat the spread of the coronavirus.

On the whole, of course, while I will miss these services greatly, I also know it is a relatively small sacrifice to make to slow the spread of the disease, give our hospitals and health professionals time to prepare for a surge in cases, lower the risk of over-crowding our hospitals and, in this way, reduce the amount of suffering and death experienced across our state and nation. This is our way of obeying our Lord's command to "love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34), a command he shared with his first disciples on the eve of his crucifixion.

While we have chosen not to gather in-person this year for the sake of our neighbor, however, that most definitely does not mean that we cannot gather in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving during this most holy of weeks. As we have seen over the last month, we are blessed with resources and staff to bring the worship of our church to you during this interim when you cannot come to church. And so I am delighted to share with you a schedule of worship opportunities below, each of which will be placed on our Together @ Mount Olivet webpage.

I am also delighted to invite you to share your blessings with each other and your church by fulfilling your pledge and making a special Easter offering. Yes, "delighted," as there is no single action that creates a sense of well-being, increases our courage, and strengthens our faith more than sharing generously those things with which God has entrusted us. You can make these offerings by viewing the Giving menu and clicking the "Online Giving" tab at the top of mtolivet.org or by using the envelope you received in the Easter mailing. Your gifts allow us to continue to record and stream our worship and other resources, support our staff, reach out to those in need through our "grab-and-go" Thursday Community Meals, offer Sunday School and Confirmation resources at a distance, and provide pastoral care throughout our congregation. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Even as I make this invitation, I am also aware that some in our congregation and community may have lost, or live in fear of losing, a part or all of their income because of the economic impact of the virus. So if you cannot make a gift at this time, then joyfully offer instead your prayers for this congregation and our larger community, even as we pray for you and all who have suffered – physically, emotionally, or economically – because of this disease. At times of struggle, we come together as a family of faith, offering what we can, extending our care and compassion to all in need, and accompanying each other on a difficult road, confident that our Lord not only meets us on that road, but has promised to bring us home.

We will get through this, dear family of Mount Olivet, and we will get through this together. In the meantime, let us draw near the climax and conclusion of our Lord's earthly ministry with awe, as together we witness Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and his triumph through the resurrection, all done for us, those God loves, saves, and blesses, that we might in turn be a blessing to others.

Yours in Christ, the One whom even death could not defeat.

Pastor Lose

Holy Week and Easter Worship Offerings – Available on the Together @ Mount Olivet webpage

Wednesday: An audio recording of Theodore Dubois' Seven Last Words, performed and recorded April 17, 2019, by present and past members of Mount Olivet's Cathedral Choir.

Thursday:

1. A video of The Living Lord's Supper, recorded April 18, 2019.
2. Maundy Thursday video reflection by the Mount Olivet pastors on how we can, even amid a pandemic, obey Jesus' command to "love one another."

Friday:

1. A video of Good Friday reflections by Mount Olivet's pastors on Jesus' seven words from the cross and why these words are particularly important and meaningful today.
2. Musical devotion, with the Cathedral Choir singing "My Song in the Night."

Saturday: A Holy Saturday devotion by Pastor Lose on the "time of waiting, time of longing" between Good Friday and Easter.

Sunday: A video of a Mount Olivet Easter celebration that rejoices in the Resurrection of our Lord with congregational singing of some of our favorite Easter hymns and recordings of the Easter Fanfare and Hallelujah Chorus with brass and orchestra, an Easter sermon by Pastor Lose, and worship led by all of our Mount Olivet pastors.

March 25, 2020 - Covid19 Virus Update

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." —Psalm 121

Dear Members of our Mount Olivet Family,

Today I am writing to share with you the news that we will continue to suspend in-person worship and all Mount Olivet-sponsored activities through the month of April. We have been counselled by the top health officials and civic leaders in the state and country that April is likely to see an increase over March in terms of the numbers of those affected by COVID-19 in Minnesota. The absolute most important thing we can do to slow the spread of this disease and thereby give those affected the best chance of receiving excellent care is to avoid gathering in groups.

Please know that I did not come to this decision quickly, as there is no single week more important to the Mount Olivet family and Christians around the world than Holy Week and the services that lead to our Easter celebration. And yet in making this decision, we continue to follow Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves by doing everything we can to isolate the spread of this virus.

Though we cannot gather together in person, we will continue providing opportunities to worship online. You can find the most recent Sunday morning service on the homepage of mtolivet.org, and you will find all the Sunday services, along with other resources we have been preparing during this time of crisis, by clicking on the box labeled "Together @ Mount Olivet."

It will be such a different Holy Week and Easter celebration this year! But it will still be a celebration of our God's tremendous love for us and all the world – love shown by God's complete immersion into our human condition, even to the point of death, in Jesus' crucifixion, and love shown by God's victory over death, disease, and all hardship through Jesus' resurrection. We have, perhaps, never needed to hear this message of solidarity, hope, and triumph more than now. For this reason, I am working with my pastoral colleagues and our music and worship staff to prepare services that will be faithful, meaningful, and hope-filled. I look forward to worshiping with you during this important time!

Both to protect our staff and limit the spread of the disease, Mount Olivet staff are working from home and the building is operating on limited hours to complete essential in-person tasks. If you need to be in touch with a staff person, you can call 612.926.7651 to leave a message, and the appropriate staff member will respond as soon as possible. If you need to speak with a pastor regarding a pastoral emergency, you can call the pastor-on-call line at 612.916.9016.

In closing, I want to make two requests. First, please join me at noontime each day going forward in praying for our church, community, country, and world. Among those needing our prayer are those who are sick, those caring for them, those who are working to slow the spread of the disease, those who are put in harm's way to help others, those whose livelihoods are threatened by this pandemic, and those charged with making the difficult but necessary decisions to see us through this crisis. Praying together makes a difference!

Second, as you are able, please remember to continue sharing your blessings with the church by fulfilling your pledges and contributing your offering. You can [click here](#) to do this online or by mailing your offering to the church. I know this is a difficult time for many, and so I do not make this request lightly. We are currently taking into consideration every possible cost-savings measure while also making sure that all essential tasks of the church continue to be completed with care and diligence, and your faithful support makes it easier to do so.

Having asked for your prayers and support, please know that I am regularly praying for you, for the well-being and health of your family and for our larger community and world. We will get through this, and we will get through it together, as we are bound together by faith in the Risen Christ, the one whom even death could not defeat!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Lose
Senior Pastor

March 16, 2020 - Covid19 Virus Update

[Click this link](#) to sign up to receive additional digital resources via email

"And remember, I am with you, even to the close of the age!" Matthew 28:20

Dear Mount Olivet Family and Friends,

I'm writing a day after we suspended in-person worship and all other Mount Olivet-sponsored activities to do our part in combating the spread of the coronavirus. On one level, this kind of health crisis reminds us of our vulnerability and even mortality, as this new virus has dramatically altered not just our church life but much of the routines and expectations of so many in our community, nation, and across the globe. On another level, however, this crisis has also reminded us of our shared humanity and of our resilience. People are pitching in. We have altered, but not abandoned, our routines. We're making the most of the technology of our day to gather and support each other, even finding a way to practice social distancing without succumbing to spiritual distancing by sharing our Sunday worship online. All of these efforts testify to the strength of our community and our commitment to weather the challenges and crises of the day together. We will get through this, and we will be even stronger on the other side!

I am writing you with a few updates and an invitation. First, the invitation: In addition to providing a regular Sunday worship experience online, the pastors and staff at Mount Olivet are working to put together resources (emails, devotions, videos, etc.) to support you, our beloved Mount Olivet community, to strengthen our faith and to offer hope, guidance, and encouragement during this challenging time. I hope to send those out roughly three times a week. If you would like to receive these resources, please [click this link](#) to subscribe. (If you currently subscribe to our online devotions or receive Mount Olivet's "This Week @ Mount Olivet" Friday email, you are already on the list.) Please note: When we have major updates – about whether we can hold in-person worship or significant changes in building hours at the church, etc. – we will continue to send those to our entire congregational email list; this invitation is for these additional resources and minor updates only.

Second, a few updates from Church and our affiliated ministries:

- In addition to suspending worship through at least March 31, we are also postponing all Mount Olivet-sponsored activities. A decision about Holy Week and Easter will be made later this month.
- Mount Olivet Preschool has closed as of today and the Mount Olivet School of Music is offering classes on-line only starting Wednesday.
- Mount Olivet Home/Careview Home is not admitting visitors except in end-of-life cases, effective this past Friday. The Mount Olivet Day Services Adult program will be suspended as of Wednesday; the childcare program will continue to be open, with child care providers having their temperature taken to assess health before every shift.
- Mount Olivet Rolling Acres and Mount Olivet Conference and Retreat Center are also implementing comprehensive plans to safe guard their clients and staff while continuing to be places of help, hope, and Christian hospitality.

I am very proud of our staff at Church and the leaders of our affiliates for their diligent and professional responses to this crisis. We will get through this!

Finally, I am mindful of both Jesus' promise to his disciples to be with them always, as well as the context in which he made it. The scene St. Matthew describes is after Jesus' resurrection, when he has visited with his disciples and is about to ascend to heaven. Which means that their initial joy at seeing their risen Lord has given way to tremendous fear about what their lives will be like after he leaves. Indeed, the very thought of his departure is nearly debilitating. In just that context, Jesus first offers what we often call "the great commission" – to share the good news in word and deed with all the world – and then makes what I like to call "the great promise" – that Jesus will be with them – and us! – at all times and in all circumstance to the very close of the age. That promise continues to be true and is something we may count on now more than ever as we face our own fears and concerns. We will get through this! Because Jesus the Christ, the one that even death could not deter from his mission of love, is with us, by our side, and for us... to the very close of the age!

Yours in good faith and Christian hope,
Pastor Lose

[Click this link](#) to sign up to receive additional digital resources via email

Please consider making an [online gift](#) to Mount Olivet Church

Program Closure Update

The Mount Olivet Preschool will be temporarily closed beginning Monday, March 16th – Friday, March 27th, 2020. More information about the preschool schedule after spring break (March 30th – April 3rd) will be shared as it is available. Please contact Director Linda Healy with questions at lindah@mtolivet.org or 612.767.2216

March 13, 2020 - Covid19 Virus Update

"I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." – Psalm 121

Dear Members of our Mount Olivet Family,

At 1 pm this afternoon, Governor Tim Walz declared a "peace-time state of emergency" across Minnesota and urged all organizations – including faith communities – to suspend all gatherings of more than 250 people and to avoid gatherings of even smaller groups that include persons at higher risk. These measures are intended to slow the spread of COVID 19. In response to the Governor's directive, we will suspend in-person worship at both of our Mount Olivet campuses this Sunday and for the remainder of March out of a deep concern to care for and protect our neighbor. Similarly, we will postpone both our Annual Meeting and spring food drive. We anticipate making and communicating a decision about our Holy Week and Easter services by the end of the month.

On Sunday morning, we will make available a video of our worship service at mtolivet.org. I will be preaching on "Jesus the Savior," based on the story of the raising of Lazarus. You will be able to access that video anytime Sunday morning and beyond. This service will also be broadcast on the radio at 11 am on WDGY 740 AM.

I had looked forward to gathering with you to read Scripture, sing some beloved hymns, and pray together. While we may not be gathering physically, we will be joined in the Spirit of Christ and unified in our commitment to do all that we can to slow the spread of this virus and, in this way, obey our Lord's command to love our neighbor.

We will be in touch regularly with any updates. In the meantime, know that you are in my prayers – prayers of gratitude for your faithfulness, prayers for health and safety for you and your loved ones and our larger community, prayers for the protection of all those responding on the front lines of this illness, and prayers for wisdom and courage for our community and civic leaders. I offer all these prayers in the confidence and faith that is ours through Jesus the Christ, our Savior, healer, and Lord.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Lose

March 12, 2020 - Covid19 Virus Update

Dear Mount Olivet Community,

We are a community of hope, rooted in God's promise through Christ to love and care for us and all the world. Anchored by that hope, I am writing because I know that many of you may have questions and concerns related to the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID 19) and our response. We are carefully monitoring updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota Department of Health. Further, we are meeting regularly with a team of specialists to be as prepared as possible to serve our congregation, be of assistance to our community, and bear witness to the hope that is ours in Christ.

This Sunday **we plan to hold worship at both campuses, our Annual Congregational meeting, and the food drive as scheduled.** To be faithful to our responsibility to limit the spread of this virus, we are taking the following steps related to our worship:

- We will not hold communion before or after worship.
- We will have soloists provide the anthems rather than the choirs.
- Nursery, Sunday School, and Choir Sunday School will not be offered.
- Rather than pass offering plates, please consider making an [online gift](#) or place your offering in one of the plates at the back of the Sanctuary as you enter or exit.
- Instead of the usual receiving line after service, pastors and greeters will greet you with encouraging smiles rather than handshakes and hugs.

To make our worship space as safe as possible, we are providing hand sanitizer in multiple locations, cleaning regularly, and encouraging all of us to practice the best hygiene practices (washing hands for at least 20 seconds and covering coughs and sneezes).

If you do not feel well or display any of the [symptoms associated with COVID 19](#), please stay home. Keep in mind that Mount Olivet's Sunday service in Minneapolis is broadcast live at 11am on WDGY 740 AM and we are now [livestreaming](#) all of our Minneapolis services (9, 10, 11am and 12noon).

We recognize that events are moving quickly and we are prepared to take all measures necessary to do our part in limiting the spread of the disease. As things change, we will continue to be in touch with our members via email and on our website.

As of today, March 12, 2020, we have suspended the following activities at both campuses through the end of March:

- Choir Rehearsals
- Confirmation
- Sunday School and Choir Sunday School
- Midweek Lenten services (both 11am service and 7pm Truth Talks),
- Pastoral hospital and home visits, to be continued through phone calls, texts, and notes
- All other Mount Olivet-sponsored activities.

For now, the Mount Olivet Preschool and Mount Olivet School of Music will remain open until further notice. We will continue to be in communication regarding activities.

A final word: In 1527, Martin Luther addressed anxious Germans who were themselves facing the prospect of an epidemic. His counsel to his parishioners and compatriots is still applicable. Above all else, he wrote, the Christian's duty is to care for one's neighbor. Taking care of the neighbor, according to Luther, includes caring for the most vulnerable, following the best medical advice available, and avoiding unnecessary risks. As we face our own challenges five centuries later, we may take heart in his confidence that God is living and active, working always for the good of God's people, and equipping us to care for and love one another as Christ has loved us. We are, ultimately, a people of hope, and so I encourage you to pray with confidence for our congregation, for health professionals and first responders, for our civic leaders, and for the most vulnerable among us, that together we may weather the challenges in front of us with equal measures of courage and compassion.

Yours in the peace of Christ,
Pastor Lose
Senior Pastor