

General Note

Our country is facing unique and trying times. The executive council has met, and has planned ways we can meet the need of our community of faith. Our meeting focused on:

- Are there needs we can help within the congregation?
- What financial adjustments would be prudent?
- How best to promote continuity of worship?

I would like to thank the executive council for their efforts now, and going forward in seeing that St. Paul's remains stable, and serves its congregation. Below find the notes from our meeting:

Keep safe and be well,
Scott Griffith, Council President

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Saturday, March 21, 2020 – 10:00 am
Executive Council Gathering

Pastor, Scott Griffith, Dave Cobaugh, Steve Kauffman & Cindy Griffith gathered at our coffee /lounge area at St. Paul's this Saturday. We had a brief conference call a few days prior, and felt it was necessary to meet in person to review the following three major items in light of the current Corona virus shutdown requirements:

- NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION
- FINANCE
- TECHNOLOGY

NEEDS:

Pastor prepared and shared a Contingency Plan for Worship. Our church is closed the weekends of March 22 & 29th. We discussed Home Worship options, both short term and long term. We discussed both non-tech and low-tech solutions.

Pastor has made numerous phone calls to those who are home bound to make sure they have enough groceries and items they may need. There is one person who did need help, Pastor seeing that she gets groceries.

Next Saturday, March 28th, the **Food Pantry** will still be held at St. John Vianney Church, 3513 William Penn Ave, Johnstown, PA starting at 11am. Preparations begin at 10am. Food will be

distributed to **those in need** while they **remain in their cars**. We will need to ask for **more volunteers, runners & packers**, as this has not been done before. St. Mary's is still doing their local fish fry by car delivery and it is going well, so we feel that this can work for us too.

It was asked that this time, do we have any idea of how many people in our congregation are in dire financial need? Answer, at this time we have no way of knowing.

FINANCE:

Steve gave an update on current finances.

We will make some adjustments to our financial outflows:

- Hold off paying Loan payments in April, which would be \$1,250. The payments for March were made.
- Hold off on paying the monthly Benevolence Payment to Synod, which would be \$833. We have not paid March as of yet.
- Continue to give money for the Food Pantry.
- Continue to pay all our staff. Including the cleaning staff as needed. Our cleaning helpers are doing an amazing job, they planned to come this same day to sanitize all the hymnals.

With these adjustments we should be ok for a couple of months before we have to tap into savings.

Steve noted Palm Sunday historically is our largest service. Pastor said, **“Whenever we go back, we will make that Sunday, Palm Sunday! And the Sunday after that will be our Easter Sunday!”**

TECHNOLOGY / SPIRITUAL NEEDS:

Pastor sent our 52 sets of worship material by e-mail to our congregation. Only 7 bounced back. Pastor had also sent much earlier and e-mail, and US mail letters, to let us know of closures. He also sent 12 postal letters to St. John's. We believe about 40% of our congregation may not have easy access to the internet or email. Sarah is calling all the people without emails, to confirm if they have an email address.

As of today, we are making plans to meet with Pastor on Monday to record his sermon for posting on-line by Tuesday or sooner. We felt it would be easiest to start with an audio recording of the sermon only. In time, should we be required to be closed longer, we may look into video.

Pastor will also be recording a daily prayer on the church telephone.

We will be getting this message out to our congregation by email & postal mail, and asking everyone to help spread the word and listen.

We closed our group discussion with a pray, and noted we had self-distanced ourselves without even knowing it, with the exception of Scott and Cindy who sat together.

Post meeting notes from Pastor:

We are now at 80 Households having Home Worship Materials for Sunday March 22nd. Also, Pastor has reinstated his Facebook account, and will be posting daily messages on that forum.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Saturday, March 28, 2020 – 2:00 pm

Executive Council Gathering / Conference Call

Pastor, Scott Griffith, & Steve Kauffman gathered after at St. Paul's this Saturday after Food Pantry. Cindy Griffith and Dave Cobaugh were conference called-in. We felt it was necessary to meet again to discuss the most recent letter from the bishop regarding Corona virus shutdown requirements, and review updates from the current week.

- FOOD PANTRY – distribution to those in-need directly to car
- BISHOP’S LETTER – dated March 26, 2020
- WORSHIP UPDATES – emails & audio
- NEXT COUNCIL MEETING - via video conference

FOOD PANTRY

280 Boxes were distributed this morning with the help of 35 volunteers. The Drive-thru went very smoothly. It wasn’t to start until 11, but the first car came at 9:30, so we started early. St. Vinny’s parking lot is one of the largest, so that worked out for the best. The cars made a full loop around the lot, and hardly any cars ever reached the service road. We were happy to see a lot of first-timers there. The Fire Company was also there with two emergency vehicles (squad truck and fire truck with lights on!) They were in helpful in directing traffic and keeping the flow.

BISHOP’S LETTER

Originally our return date was April 6th. In the most recent letter of March 26, the Bishop states; “we must suspend our in-person worship services and in-person meetings indefinitely”. The letter also lists other denominations:

Additionally, this is the policy that most church bodies in our area are following. The Altoona-Johnstown Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church has suspended services indefinitely. The Orthodox Churches have closed public worship at the order of the Ecumenical Patriarch. The Episcopal Church has suspended in-person worship until the shutdown is over. The Presbyterian and Methodist churches have suspended services. We are all doing the best we can to care for our people.

We all agreed, we don’t like the word “indefinite”. Pastor will write a letter to inform the congregation and find a better word.

WORSHIP UPDATES

We will work on getting this pre-recorded Video Link out on multi sites. We can put on Facebook and U-tube both, and encourage others to share, to get the work out. Pastor likes that viewers can start & stop, and watch at your leisure. Several of his colleagues are using Zoom (on-line live meetings), and have to set up a specific time, or have technical difficulties. So, he likes this recording best!

Pastor and Cindy will work together on Tuesday, March 31st to record the next worship service. Sarah has suggested we included photos of Pastor too.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

- Steve mentioned that it has been good seeing envelopes and offerings continue to come in. We suggested in the next mailing, that we need to keep thanking our congregation for sending in envelopes and offerings.
- Scott asked that we hold on posting these minutes, until council has a chance to review.
- A Zoom license will be obtained before the next council meeting (Monday, April 6), so we can continue meeting.
- None of us could believe it had only been a week since our last Executive Committee Meeting.