



ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
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Rick Sauer, Pastor

April 23, 2020

Dear Friends in Faith:

St. Mark's is moving to celebrate Holy Communion Online!

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unusual and extraordinary situations. While we are unable to gather in person for worship and fellowship as a congregation, internet-based social media platforms have allowed us to create and successfully provide worship opportunities for our members and others. Missing, however, from our online worship has been the celebration of Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is one of two sacraments, commanded by Christ, in which the Word of God is joined to physical elements (bread and wine/grape juice). It brings Christ presence into our midst, bringing forgiveness, spiritual nurture, communion with the saints and a foretaste of the feast to come. It is a central part of worship and spiritual life.

To address this missing and integral piece of our congregational life, St. Mark's council has approved the following motion:

“That until such time the Province of Manitoba and the provincial health authority allow public worship to resume, a Communion at a Distance practice be initiated, the logistics of which shall be determined by Pastor Sauer in consultation with the council chair and the Worship Committee chair.”

Even though online communion is very new, and somewhat untried, the National and Synodical bishops of Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada, while reluctant, have not forbidden this means of celebrating the Lord's Supper. Their letter of April 2020 encourages us to follow what our local context requires: *“...our recommendation is that you continue with the Holy Communion practices that your community already has in place. We trust you, Christ's ministers of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service, to steward the mysteries of God that have been entrusted to you with integrity and grace.”*

Similarly, MNO Bishop Jason Zinko, sent out a Pastoral letter in which he clearly states that: *“...I want to fully affirm that letter and offer my support to you in your own decisions. You will have my full support, regardless of the practice you adopt.”*

Celebrating Holy Communion online.

Without doubt, this is uncharted territory. After much discussion, the council has based its decision on a belief that the body of Christ transcends time & space – as it says in our scriptures and worship liturgy. The body of Christ is not limited to a certain space or building at a certain specified time of the day.

This may be a new way to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but these are exceptional circumstances. We cannot be physically present in our building and it appears that this situation will persist for some time yet. So, we are invited to join together now, in this new way, to receive, hope, comfort, connection to the body of Christ, and a visible, physical reminder of Christ's presence and the grace of God.

Implementation

Our first online communion worship service will be on Sunday, May 3.

We originally thought we would celebrate Holy Communion online in real time using live-streaming technology. On the advice of our MNO Bishop, we now intend to incorporate the communion liturgy into our regular pre-recorded worship services. It is our hope that those wishing to participate will do so on Sunday mornings, either as part of our Facebook Watch party or by viewing the service using the link on our website. By doing so, we will gather as community, not physically but through communication technology.

Further information about how members and visitors can participate will be made available on our website within the next few days. This will include:

- An instructional video on how to prepare a communion table in your home
- A check-list of what you will need to do prior to the beginning of the service
- The recipe we use for our communion bread for those who wish to bake their own. It is not necessary to use our recipe. You may use your own, use store-bought bread, gluten free bread or wafers.
- The liturgy of the communion service that you can print off and follow along on Sunday morning

To access these resources, please visit <http://stmarkslutheran.ca/worship-with-us/online-worship/>

If the above link does not work, go to stmarkslutheran.ca and look for Online Worship under the Worship with Us menu.

Assistance in Accessing Wine / Grape Juice and Bread

If you do not have easy access to wine, juice or bread, please contact Sarah Harrington by the Wednesday prior to the Sunday service to arrange a way to get church wine/juice and wafers/bread to you. You can reach Sarah by phone at (204) 269- 2321 or email at sea103@hotmail.com