

In response to COVID-19, or, coronavirus, it is incumbent on communities of faith to work to protect those who are most affected and most vulnerable.

For many of us, contracting the coronavirus may be little more than an inconvenience with a cough, fever, and body aches. However, for those with heart or lung problems, those with diabetes, those with weak immune systems, and the elderly, coronavirus can be a fatal illness.

Jesus commanded us to care for “the least of these.” It is not only the right thing to do, but a command from Jesus to make sure we are working to protect the most vulnerable among us.

To that end, we are taking some initial steps to help protect our worshipping community.

Effective Sunday, 3/15/2020, Pleasant Valley Lutheran will begin taking the following actions:

1. We will no longer share the peace during our worship service. Following the prayers of intercession, Pr. JonPaul will say, “The Peace of the Lord be with you all.” The congregation will respond, “And also with you.” We will then sit down and continue with the offering.
2. Offering. We are going to set up a table at the entrance of the sanctuary with the offering plate. Please drop in your offering without touching the plate or table as you enter for worship. At the time of the offering in the service, an usher will bring the offering forward. If you forget at the beginning of the service, there will be a second plate left at the entrance to give your offering as you leave.
3. Communion will no longer be done at the rail. We will come up and receive the bread and wine in a line, 1 pew at a time, to limit the number of people standing in line together. Please avoid touching the communion tray, but wait for the server to hand you the wafer or cup. Try to avoid contact with the server. All servers will use hand sanitizer prior to assisting and after serving. Everyone is encouraged to use hand sanitizer before and after communing.
4. Everyone is encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water before and after worship. If you sneeze or cough into your hands, please exit the sanctuary to wash before touching anything. Instead, sneeze into your elbow or into a tissue that can be immediately discarded. Avoid touching your face as much as possible.
5. Pr. JonPaul will no longer shake hands as you leave the sanctuary to be sure we are not spreading germs between all of us. He will stand at the entrance, however, and greet you and your family.
6. Anyone who assists with food preparation **MUST** wash their hands with soap and water before touching any food, plates, cups, or silverware.
7. We will follow CDC guidelines for cleaning. Surfaces that are regularly touched **MUST** be washed each week after worship: Pews, communion rail, communion trays, tables, chairs, door handles
8. We will post information around the church from the CDC on symptoms of COVID-19, how to effectively wash your hands, and other helpful information and reminders.

9. We will continue to provide recordings of sermons and are looking into video/live-streaming options if you need or choose to worship from home. Check our FB page or website for updates.

MOST OF ALL: Please, if you are at all feeling ill, stay home. We love seeing you on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. We love having all of our community together in worship. But, if you are feeling ill, you need to stay home and rest, not only for your own health, but the health of our whole community.

If you are among those who are at higher risk of serious or fatal illness from coronavirus, please use your best judgment regarding attending worship. Stay safe. Stay healthy.

A few other things:

- Pleasant Valley Lutheran will follow all state and local recommendations regarding gatherings. Should the state or local government limit gatherings, we will follow those recommendations.
- Should the school districts of Eleva-Strum or Eau Claire close due to a confirmed Coronavirus outbreak, we will also begin limiting our in-person church events, including worship.
- It is our hope that we can be proactive without being over-reactive, instituting best practices based on the best available knowledge and science regarding this virus. As we learn more, we will keep you as updated as possible and change our practices, as necessary. Please continue to rely on reputable sources for information, including the CDC, WHO, and WI Health Department.

You are salt and light. In this time of fear and heightened anxiety, we at Pleasant Valley are committed to continuing to proclaim Christ crucified for the sake of the world.

Blessings to you,

Pr. JonPaul