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355 E. State Road 120  
Fremont, IN 46737



Phone: 260.495.4306  
Fax: 260.495.5076

March 31, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ at Peace,

Once again, I want to start this letter with words from a familiar hymn, "Abide with Me." These are the words from verse five, and I hope you sing them in your mind and heart with confidence!

*I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless; Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory? I triumph still if Thou abide with me.*

God the Father continues to care for us, preserving and sustaining us. God the Son has redeemed us with His blood, and we are walking with Him in these days of Lent. And God the Holy Spirit continues to enlighten and sanctify us with His good gifts. We fear no foe with God at our side!

We continue to receive guidance from the state and local governments. We also continue in our attempt to make the best decisions to keep our congregation and greater communities safe. While these are difficult decisions, we do not make them under compulsion. Rather, we do so in keeping with our Christian understanding of the fifth commandment that we are to "help and support [our neighbor] in every physical need." We continue to pray for God's guidance. We ask for your prayers as well!

**Please read this whole letter – both pages – carefully, as we have a number of things to discuss!**

Here are some additional changes that we will be implementing for the coming weeks:

1. We are cancelling our worship gatherings, Bible class, and Sunday School for the weekend of April 4/5 (Palm Sunday).
2. We are also cancelling our worship gatherings for April 9 (Maundy Thursday) and April 10 (Good Friday).
3. At this time, we are still undecided on whether worship gatherings on Easter can or should happen. Please keep this in your prayers.
4. We will continue to use the Internet for worship broadcasts, using our website ([plcms.org](http://plcms.org)) and Facebook ([facebook.com/plcms](https://facebook.com/plcms)) for links to services, resources, devotional materials, and additional announcements.
5. All other activities in the building remain cancelled until further notice.
6. Wee Creations continues to be closed for at least another two weeks as well.
7. Our staff continues to work from home as much as possible. Therefore, we might not be at the building for "drop-ins" or be returning phone calls as quickly as we might like.

In the meantime, I would like to provide opportunities for congregation members to celebrate Holy Communion. I believe I have found a way to do so that is both safe and logistically feasible - groups of no more than eight people will come in to the sanctuary at the appointed time; we will have a brief service of Holy Communion; and then the groups will exit. I will then sanitize everything before the next group enters.

In order to accomplish this, I have created an online signup sheet for you to register for a time to receive Holy Communion. You can either type this address directly in to your web browser, or you can use our website to link to it.

The link for the signup is: [www.tinyurl.com/uwxs9yq](http://www.tinyurl.com/uwxs9yq)

*If you do not have internet available to you, please call me and I will help you sign up for a time. I would like everyone that desires it to have an opportunity to sign up!*

Additionally, we will continue reaching out to the congregation with information and support. We are implementing an electronic version of our newsletter through email. This is something new, so please be patient with us as we get it going!

Finally, if you or someone you know is in need of help, please let me know. We have people ready, willing, and able to offer assistance with anything from grocery shopping to meals. As you know, we are in this together!

To close out this letter, here is another collect prayer for peace and hope:

*Lord Jesus, in Your death and resurrection You have conquered, and in You, we too are conquerors. When we are threatened and frightened of the situations we must face, strengthen and encourage us with Your Word. We trust the grip of Your hand and know that nothing can separate us from your love. Amen.*

And as we started with the fifth verse, I want to conclude with the first verse of the hymn:

*Abide with me, fast falls the eventide. The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

And finally the words of Christ Himself from John 14:

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.  
Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."*

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

Pastor Jeffrey Teeple