

Dear Covenant Family and Friends

COVID-19 cases continue to increase and the State of Texas now considers it a misdemeanor punishable by a fine to be in a public facility without a mask. A gathering of people who are stationary for long periods of time (e.g. a worship service) is still a high-risk activity even with all masks in place. According to the Texas DHS, Harris County has the highest number of cases, more than 10K more than Dallas County as of July 7. The following web sites (including our Synod's) are trusted sites referring links for information and for tracking beyond our local news outlets:

<https://www.texmed.org/Coronavirus/>

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/default.aspx> (includes a helpful dashboard)

<https://gulfcoastsynod.org/coronavirus-covid-19-resources/>

We understand and share the anxiety about in-person worship that continued caution kindles. We hope you are able to see how, in addition to the general precautions issued to everyone nationally and internationally, the decision to gather for worship depends very much on the makeup of each congregation's population, especially as it relates to vulnerable participants. We are actually serving our community as we continue social distancing and safe practices to reduce the potential for infection and community spread. Until the major criteria for gathering are cleared, remember this important and often overlooked fact— even if you are not ill, you could be an unwilling carrier. Let us embrace the wisdom of caution for the sake of others as well as ourselves. Caring for our neighbor is the signature of love as Jesus so clearly showed us urged us to follow. Become a carrier of good news, that God's grace is fully sufficient for these times (2 Cor. 12:8–10). This may be our best showcase of living our faith we may ever have this decade. In, with, about, above, and below we are supported by the power of the Holy Spirit. *We can do this!*

May God's peace reign supreme in your hearts.

We are God's beloved.

Covenant Lutheran Church Executive Committee, July 2020

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[Jesus said} "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" [The lawyer] said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10: 36–37